



**AFTERSCHOOL 2025 - 2026**

# **GASTON COUNTY FAMILY YMCA PARENT HANDBOOK**



# GET READY FOR FUN & LEARNING

## FRIENDSHIP, ACHIEVEMENT, BELONGING

### Welcome to Afterschool 2025 – 2026!

We're excited to offer a wonderful experience for children throughout Gaston County. Our program is designed to provide a safe and fun environment where kids can learn, grow, and explore the world around them each afternoon.

The Y's program is so much more than fun and play. Through a holistic approach to youth development, all activities focus on social-emotional, cognitive or physical development that children need as they progress through childhood. Our monthly themes are designed to spark creativity, inspire curiosity, and promote learning in a fun and interactive way.

**Mission Statement: To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind and body for all!**

### YMCA CORE VALUES

The Gaston County Family YMCA is committed to a value-based Character Development. The following core values are incorporated into all youth activities:

- Caring: Show a sincere concern for others
- Honesty: Be truthful in what you say and do
- Respect: Treat each other as we'd all like to be treated
- Responsibility: Be accountable for your promises and actions
- Faith: strengthened by a belief in God and the importance of building a strong moral foundation.

As we prepare for the upcoming school year, we want to remind families that our afterschool program is here to support you every step of the way. From homework help to engaging extracurricular activities, we strive to ensure that each child has the resources and encouragement they need to succeed academically and personally.

Parents, we know how important it is for you to feel confident in the care and guidance your children receive. That's why we maintain open lines of communication and encourage your active involvement in our program. Together, we can create a supportive network that nurtures our youth and helps them thrive.

Thank you for choosing the Gaston County Family YMCA Afterschool Program. We look forward to a year filled with growth, discovery, and joy. Let's make this school year the best one yet!

**YOUR Y AFTERSCHOOL TEAM**

## ABOUT Y PROGRAMS

The Y is all about giving kids an engaging experience! By offering multiple locations throughout Gaston County the Y offers a mix of fun and educational activities to keep kids minds and muscles active after the school bell rings!

## CHARACTER VALUES

In keeping with the YMCA Mission and Character Values of Caring, Honesty, Respect and Responsibility, appropriate behavior is expected of all participants in YMCA programs. Respectful interactions between students, parents/guardians and YMCA staff are at the core of the YMCA Mission and essential to having a successful program experience.

- Every person has the right to be safe and healthy within their YMCA program environment.
- Every person has the right to be respected and treated fairly.
- Every person has the right to grow in Spirit, Mind and Body and is equally valued and important to the YMCA. It is implied that these rights apply to all individuals, staff and parents. If a person infringes on another's rights, the YMCA staff will take appropriate action to resolve the situation.

## PROGRAM FOCUS

Our hope is that every child will experience:

### **ACHIEVEMENT – Learn and master skills that help them realize their passions, talents and potential.**

- Experience new things
- Experience a variety of activities – outdoor, physical and creative
- Use their imagination
- Experience a sense of pride in their actions, choices and projects
- Enjoy reading through storytelling, silent reading and reading aloud
- Learn swimming skills and safety around water, and be active

### **RELATIONSHIP – Build friendships with new friends and staff role models adding to their well-being.**

- Make friends, have fun and enjoy being a kid
- Develop relationships with adults who believe in them
- Leave the Y with new friendships that are long lasting

### **BELONGING – Help youth feel like they belong so they feel safe, welcome and free to express their individuality.**

- Be apart of something bigger than them – the community / family
- Experience opportunities to share and express their ideas with a group
- Experience opportunities to make choices for themselves and the group
- Experience the Afterschool Club spirit within them and enjoy sharing it with others
- Respect themselves, others and nature.

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Y is a non-profit charitable organization that strengthens the foundations of our community. Thanks to the community, members, and staff donations to the Y's Annual Giving Campaign, the Y offers financial assistance for various programs and membership to those unable to pay the full fees.



## ENROLLMENT AND PAYMENT

Enrollment must be completed for each child participating 5 days prior to your intended first day of Afterschool. Afterschool registration is ongoing throughout the school year - not week by week. This includes registration, health history, payment, and waiver sections. There is a one time registration fee as well as

The registration fee is non-refundable. Payment of tuition is due in full at time of registration or the setup of weekly draft payments must occur for registration to be processed and accepted.

All tuition must be paid prior to student's attendance. Weekly drafts are processed the Friday before the week of attendance. Weekly tuition is not prorated for any reason.

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

## CANCELATION

Cancellation for any reason requires a written notice given to the Program Director or Registrar in writing (including via email) one week prior to that expected program cancellation.

- Children cannot be cancelled week by week. A cancellation will remove a student from the remainder of the program.
- Program Fees are not prorated based on daily attendance.

## NON PAYMENT

We reserve the right to discontinue service if an account becomes 5 days delinquent. We understand that occasional financial situations arise; please keep the YMCA Program Director/Registrar informed as to your family's situation in advance of delinquency so we can work with you. Upon registering for the YMCA Afterschool Program, you are responsible for payment of all program dues associated to your child's enrollment in the program.

## ELECTONIC AUTHORIZED PICK UP/CODEWORDS

At the time of registration parents/guardians will be asked to provide a CODE WORD or PHONE NUMBER and authorized pick ups. Each day when picking up your child(ren), you will be asked to provide either the PHONE NUMBER, CODE WORD or a photo ID. Your child will only be released to those who know the PHONE NUMBER or CODE WORD or whose photo ID matches the names provided on the Authorized Pick-up list. This is to ensure the safety of every child.

## HEALTH HISTORY

A complete history of your child's medical and behavior must be submitted at the time of registration. This helps the YMCA best support your child while they are in Y programs.

## ENROLLMENT CONTACTS

- Stowe : Kelly Davis | [kdavis@gastonymca.org](mailto:kdavis@gastonymca.org)
- Warlick: Jada Cron | [jcron@gastonymca.org](mailto:jcron@gastonymca.org)

# OUR COUNSELORS

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

## WHO WE ARE

Our staff is as diverse as our children and comprised of men and women who want to make an impact on their community. We hire amazing staff that consist of high school students, college students, graduates and working professionals. Our staff are people who love the chance to make a positive impact on the children in our programs. They are amazing people with good hearts!

Prior to their employment, 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 participate in 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 quality risk management reviews, are just a few examples of trainings our staff teams go through over the course of a year.

## FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

The YMCA believes that the best way to ensure a great experience for your child is for parents and staff to have a relationship with the best interests of your child in mind. We want to work together to learn about your child. Please come to the Director with any questions or concerns. The staff treat families and visitors with professionalism, and we ask that they be treated in the same manner. Behavior that is inappropriate, disrespectful, threatening or abusive in nature will not be tolerated.

## RATIO AND SAFETY

Y Childcare programs (including Afterschool, Camp, Childwatch) adhere to the following staff to participant ratios:

6 Weeks to 11 months - 1:3 ratio

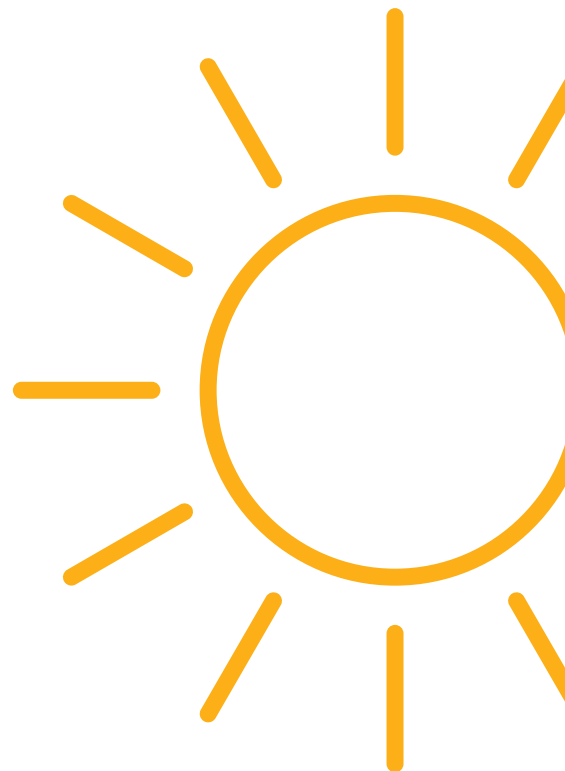
12 months to 24 months - 1:6 ratio

3 years to 5 years - 1:8 ratio

6+ years - 1:12 ratio

Y Staff check restrooms before a child goes into a restroom in a public place.

Note: Y Staff do not go into the restroom with kids. Kids must be fully potty trained and able to use the bathroom independently. This includes being able to change in and out of their swim suits on their own for any water activities.



# SAFETY FIRST

## Emergency Protocols & Transportation

### Bus Rules & Expectations

- Stay seated at all times with your back against the seat and feet facing forward.
- Keep hands, feet, and belongings to yourself and inside the bus.
- Use quiet voices – no yelling, loud talking, or disruptive behavior.
- Follow the bus driver's instructions and YMCA staff directions the first time.
- No eating, drinking, or gum chewing on the bus.
- Respect the bus, driver, staff, and fellow passengers – no teasing, roughhousing, or inappropriate language.
- Electronic devices are not allowed to be used on the bus unless authorized by staff for a specific reason.
- Report any problems or concerns to YMCA staff immediately.

### EMERGENCY Protocols

In the case of an emergency while at the Y, staff will follow the below steps.

1. A staff member will administer immediate basic first aid.
2. Staff will call 911 if needed. A staff person will remain with the child until parent/guardian arrives.
  - Please note that 911 will be called for all serious head/neck injuries.
3. Staff will contact the parent/guardian if immediate medical care is necessary
4. Staff will stay in contact with parents/guardians with information regarding the incident and necessary forms completed.

### Missed Bus Protocol

If a child misses the bus from school to the YMCA, the school will contact the parent/guardian directly. It is the parent's responsibility to arrange transportation if their child misses the bus. Please note that YMCA staff are not able to leave the site to pick up participants. If a child repeatedly misses the bus, the Afterschool Director will follow up with the family to discuss ongoing transportation concerns.

### Consequences for Unsafe Bus Behavior

To ensure the safety of all participants, any unsafe or disrespectful behavior on the bus will result in appropriate consequences. These may include a verbal warning, assigned seating, parent communication, or temporary suspension from riding the bus. If a child is suspended from riding the bus, they are still welcome to attend their afterschool program; however, the parent or guardian will be responsible for providing their own transportation. Repeated or serious behavior issues may result in longer term bus suspension. Our priority is to maintain a safe and respectful environment for all riders.



# CREATING A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL

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

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

Our staff will administer first aid for minor injuries. You will be notified if your child needs prompt medical care.

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

## WHEN TO STAY AT HOME

- Temperature of 100.4 degrees or greater
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Rash (if unknown cause)
- Suspected communicable disease
- Severe cold with fever, coughing, unclear mucus
- Bronchitis or other throat infections such as strep
- Nits or lice in hair

## MEDICATION AT THE Y

### Prescription medication

A copy of a doctor's order (prescription) and a completed medication form must be submitted prior to the administration of all medications.

All prescription medication must be in its original container with the pharmacy label intact, with your child's name, dosage, doctor's name and phone number, date the prescription was filled, expiration date and specific instructions for administering and storing the medication. You may want to ask your pharmacist to divide the medication into two bottles; one to be kept at home and one to be kept at the Y. We will not keep medication(s) at the YMCA over the weekend and will need to be signed in and out each week.

### Non-prescription medicine

Over the counter medication will only be accepted if it's in its original container. Parents must provide detailed information on dosage from a physician.

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

## ALLERGIES

When filling out your child's Health History, please indicate all allergies. If your child requires an EpiPen due to severe reactions provide at least one Non-Expired EpiPen for your child's counselor to keep on them at all times. Parents/guardians will need to follow the above Prescription medication guidelines. Parents are responsible for providing up to date EpiPens and disposal of used EpiPens.

# THE DAY

## DROP OFF, PICK UP, AND WHAT TO BRING

### DROP OFF/RIDES IN

Students will be met by Y staff at the end of the school day. All attending students must be on the roster in order to enter the program.

### PICK UP/RIDES OUT

Curbside pick up is from 4:00 – 6:00 pm. Contact your sites cellphone and a Y Staffer will greet you, ask for your CODE WORD, or Photo ID before they can release your child to be signed out. Please remain patient while we retrieve your child from their huddle.

If needing to pick up prior to 4 pm please call your sites cellphone to coordinate pick up plans!

### 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 not picked up by 6:00 pm. The fee will be assessed at the rate of \$1 per minute, per child starting at 6:00 pm.
- Staff will begin calling authorized pick ups/emergency contacts
- If contact cannot be made by 30 minutes after dismissal the Y will contact local authorities.
- If Y Staff believes a parent/guardian is intoxicated when they arrive to pick up their child, we will detain the child until an alternate plan can be arranged for transportation of the child/parent. Local authorities will be contacted if parent/guardian is unruly or out of control.

### WHAT NOT TO BRING:

- ELECTRONICS, CELLPHONES
- MONEY, VALUABLES, JEWELRY
- TOYS FROM HOME
- WEAPONS OR CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES

All items will be confiscated and returned to parent/guardian at the time of pick up.

### CODE WORDS/AUTHORIZED PICK UP

When picking up your child(ren), you will be asked to provide the PHONE NUMBER, CODE WORD or a photo ID daily. Your child will only be released to those who know the code word or whose photo ID matches the names provided on the Authorized Pick-up list. This is to ensure the safety of every child.

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/guardian. If anyone is unable to provide the Phone Number, Code Word or provide a photo ID consistent with the listed Authorized Pick-ups phone verification will be required. Please note this process can take additional time.

### CUSTODY

In cases of separation or divorced parents where visitation rights are denied to one parent, we cannot deny releasing the child to such parent unless a court decree or separation documents are in our file expressly forbidding such parent to pick the child up from our program, or from pick up at times not allowed by court decree. The court decree must also be specific to the rights of visitation on the YMCA property during Afterschool. The court document must specify in writing that visitation is permitted by the non-custodial parent. Otherwise, visitation will not be permitted.

Please call the Director if you have specific custody issues with the non-custodial that we need to be aware of the non-custodial that we need to be aware of.

If your child's information changes, we ask that you update the information with your YMCA director with 24 hours.

### WITHDRAWAL AT THE Y'S REQUEST

The Y has the option to withdraw a child for any of the following reasons:

- Non-payment of fees
- Failure of parents to pick up child on time
- Failure to provide the YMCA with current emergency/medical information
- Unresolved disciplinary issues
- Inappropriate conduct of parent/guardian



# BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS & DISCIPLINE

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

We respond to misbehaviors and conflicts in an appropriate manner. We have zero tolerance for violence and bullying (see chart below). We hold the right to suspend or expel children from our programs if they or their family threatens safety or interferes with the sustainability of a quality program.

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

## **The YMCA does not condone and will not permit:**

- Corporal punishment
- Ridiculing, threatening, using an inappropriate loud voice
- Leaving children unsupervised
- Use of profanity

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

- Use appropriate language at all times
- Cooperate with staff and follow directions
- Respect other children and staff, equipment, facilities, and yourself
- Stay in the program areas - running away is not acceptable.

## **BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT**

If a child is unable to comply with behavior expectations, they will be redirected and expectations will be reviewed by a counselor. Depending on severity, the child will be given a consequence.

- Verbal warning given : reminder of rule/expectation
- Loss of activity time or partial loss of activity time - time to refocus and redirect. Parent/guardian will be notified
- If child continues to be unable to comply with the behavior expectations, or redirection takes longer than 5 - 10 minutes, behavior will be documented and the parent/guardian will be notified in writing.
- If the child is still unable to comply with the behavior expectations after several redirection attempts and/or documented incidents, the Director will set up a conference with the parent/guardian, Lead Staff and child. Together they will produce a written contract agreeing to acceptable behavior and alternative solutions and consequences if behavior does not improve. The Executive Director is also notified of the incident and meeting.

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

## **Behaviors that may result in immediate dismissal**

Included but not limited to:

- Any action that could threaten or pose a direct threat to the physical/emotional safety of the child, other children or staff
- Fighting (including shoving, pushing, hitting and/or any intimidating act towards a counselor or program participant).
- Possession of a weapon of any kind
- Vandalism or destruction of property of any kind
- Inappropriate conduct
- Swearing or cursing
- Possession of or use of alcohol or controlled substances unless under prescription of a doctor
- Running away
- Biting

## **IS IT BULLYING?**

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

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

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

# MORE IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Babysitting, Cell Phones, Group Assignments and more!

## BABYSITTING/FRATERNIZATION

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 YMCA 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.

## CELL PHONE USAGE

Students will not be allowed to use their cell phones during the Y program. If a student is found with their cell phone, we will confiscate it. We will only return the cell phone to the parent/guardian. If you need to contact your child during the day, please feel free to contact your sites cellphone.

## GROUP ASSIGNMENTS

Group assignments (Huddles) are made based on the ages of the students and enrollment. We make every effort to keep students in the same group but this is not guaranteed. It may be necessary to make adjustments due to ratios and registration.

## PARENT COMMUNICATION

We are committed to giving Y families all the information needed to be prepared for an awesome experience. Emails will be sent to inform families of special activities or program needs such as swim days, special activities, and family activities. If you are not receiving regular emails please contact the Program Director.

## SPECIAL NEEDS

Y Afterschool is open to all children, and the YMCA aims to work with children of all abilities. Parents have a duty to disclose significant medical, physical, or behavioral needs at the time of enrollment. Due to the large-group format of our programs, the Y is unable to provide one-on-one care. Children must be able to participate with the stated student/staff ratios as well as scheduled activities. This includes independently being able to use the bathroom and change clothes, as well as staying in program spaces.

## OUT OF SCHOOL DAYS

The Gaston County Family YMCA offers full-day childcare from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM, following the Gaston County Schools and Piedmont Community Charter School calendars. Program locations may vary.

## NONDISCRIMINATION

The Gaston County Family YMCA embraces values and beliefs which support and reflect the inclusion and appreciation of all individuals, regardless of race, color, physical or mental ability, religion, medical conditions, sexual orientation, gender Identity or expression, and age. We are proud to be an equal opportunity employer and provider of services to the community.





**Mission Statement: To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind and body for all!**

**Cherryville Family YMCA**

215 N Mountain St.  
Cherryville, NC 28021

**Stowe Family YMCA**

196 YMCA Dr.  
Belmont, NC 28012

**Warlick Family YMCA**

2221 Robinwood Rd.  
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