

# PARENT HANDBOOK

**School Age Child Care**



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## **Program Overview**

We understand the importance of a quality school age childcare and have worked very hard to develop a program you and your child(ren) will enjoy. We offer both before and after school programs, school break programs and summer programs for children that provide reliable care for working parents. Our program is geared to meet the educational, social, emotional and physical needs of the children in our community.

The Watertown Family YMCA operates after school programs in 13 schools daily. Each SACC site is registered with the New York State Office of Children and Family Services and operate according to New York State Regulations and the YMCA policies and procedures. Please see your Site Director or visit our SACC office if you have any questions or concerns at any time.

The YMCA SACC program thrives on an environment is created by staff that allows children to have choices in activities. Choices of activities foster independence, cooperation and self-control among the children who participate. Activities provided include, but are not limited to:

- **Active play, Sports, Outdoor Activities**
- **Reading**
- **Arts and Games**
- **Creative Play**
- **Homework Supervision and Assistance**

## **Character Development Leadership**

The YMCA develops character by demonstrating and teaching the core values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.

## **Enrollment/Contract Change/Withdrawal from Program**

Registration is offered to the existing participants and then to the general public. Enrollment capacities are limited to the available space within the school and NYS Regulations.

Enrollment forms must be completed in the SACC office prior to your child's start date. (Credit is not given for absences or for Snow Days or Emergency Early Dismissal). If there are changes in the information provided to SACC, it is the responsibility of the parent to update us the month prior of the change. Speak with your SACC office about any changes you need to make.

Current phone numbers, addresses and pick up authorizations are imperative.

New enrollment documents are required each school year and summer program. (Payment for the school program is exclusive of the additional costs for full day programs and school break programs)

## **Withdrawing**

Notification must be provided to the SACC administrative team of changes and withdrawing from program at least two weeks prior to any change. Re-admittance will be based upon space availability.

## **Transferring from one Site to another Site**

Transferring from one SACC Site to another requires notice. The transfer can take a week or more before the child can attend the new site; based on availability of spaces at the new site.

## **Full Day Programs, School Breaks, Holidays, and Snow Days**

- **Full Day Programs:** Any child registered with the SACC program, regardless of school, may attend a full day program. There will be dates sent out for registration for each full day program. There is an additional fee for a registered child to attend full day programs. Full day programs begin at 7:00a.m. and end at 6:00 p.m.
- **School Delays:** In the event there is a school delay in the morning, SACC sites will open 1 hour later than their normal opening time and we will run until school begins. **Exception: Evans Mills will open at 9:00am.**
- **School Cancellations and Snow Days:** If Watertown School District closes prior to the school day beginning, there will be a Snow Day program available. If the morning SACC program has begun, the staff will telephone the parents and inform them they need to pick up their child(ren) and that there will be a program available at the Fairgrounds. If the school day has commenced and school is canceled, SACC will also be closed. Snow Days will be on a first CALL first serve basis: verbal confirmation is required, messages left will not be honored as a reservation. Calls and program times will vary dependent upon when school is officially canceled and staff availability due to travel, etc. The Remind system will alert the times for reservation calls and program times. Required items for a Snow Day Program that must be present upon sign in: Snow pants/snow suit, winter jacket, winter hat, gloves/mittens, snow boots, sneakers and a healthy lunch (no fast food, soda or any items that need to be heated up). Children will need to eat breakfast before they come to program as we do not offer breakfast.
- **Emergency Dismissal or Emergency Go Home Drill:** In the event school closes early for an emergency SACC will close. If your school plans an emergency go home drill SACC will be closed; no credit will be given for those days.

- **When After School Activities Are Canceled:** Some of our program locations do not run if the school cancels their after school activities. Please ask your Site Director where your child attends SACC what the procedure is if the school cancels after school activities.
- Our program reserves the right to close programming if there is a travel ban or a situation the program deems unsafe to run a program.

## **Payment Agreement**

The person who signs the Registration Form will be the designated person responsible for paying fees, receive receipts and be allowed to make inquiries about billing information. Please read and review our billing procedures thoroughly in your enrollment contract and contact our office if you have any questions or concerns.

- Payments accepted at any of the Y branches, or may be made by telephone by calling the SACC office.
- There is a fee for all returned checks.
- Fees are not prorated for illness, suspension, holidays, inclement weather or scheduled school vacation days.
- Fees are subject to change.

## **Financial Assistance and Child Care Assistance through DSS**

The Watertown Family YMCA SACC program strives to provide quality child care to children regardless of the family's ability to pay the full fees. Funding for the financial assistance portion of our program is provided by the United Way of Northern New York and fundraising efforts by the YMCA. Those families not able to pay the full fee may be awarded Financial Assistance in the form of a Gateway Scholarship. The amount of assistance is based on a careful review of each family's finances and circumstances.

Financial Assistance is awarded separately for the school year and again for the summer. Separate applications must be completed each year for either session. If parents are assessed a parent fee, the parent must keep current with that obligation in order to keep assistance.

Those families who receive assistance from Department of Social Services are ultimately responsible for the cost of the child's care. If it is determined that your care is not billable to DSS or if we submit a bill for payment and DSS does not pay for the hours your child was in care, YOU will be responsible for the balance due. Please review and sign the Department of Social Services Billing Policies and Procedures form during your enrollment.

## **Tax Information**

Please keep all of your receipts for income tax information. Our Federal Tax Identification number is 15-0559207. End of year statements will be post marked by January 31<sup>st</sup> each year.

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## **Custodial Documentation**

In the absence of a court order, stating otherwise, both parents will be afforded equal access to their child. This program cannot, without a court order, limit the access of one parent by the request of the other parent, regardless of the reason. If a situation presents itself where one parent does not want the other parent to have access to the child that parent should remove the child from program until a court order is issued.

A legal restraining order must be on file at the SACC office and site if biological/adoptive parent is not allowed to pick up the child. Our program will not accept approval by a parent or guardian, written or otherwise, contradicting the legal restraining order.

Parents will submit to the SACC office a copy of the court order, divorce decree or other legal documentation to prevent an unauthorized pick up by the non-custodial parent. Documentation must be kept in the child's file located at the site and administrative office.

## **Privacy Statement**

The YMCA SACC program is committed to the protection of you and your child's personal information. Personally identifiable information will not be shared with third parties unless otherwise stated herein, or a specific release is obtained authorizing the release of the information. This Privacy Policy covers our treatment of personally identifiable information that is collected during the registration process and while your children are in our care.

From time to time the program will share information with third parties such as attendance records, behavior logs, health logs and other demographical information on the families that we serve. If that occurs, this information will not personally identify you or your children.

Our program does release information to third parties such as Department of Social Services, Office of Children and Family Services and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (such as: personally identifiable information in connection with childcare financial assistance for the families and program). All children's records are subject to review and/or reproduction by the Office of Children and Family Services.

We use the information we collect about you in order 1) to provide our services, 2) to provide customer service, 3) to improve our services and 4) to provide you information regarding our services. We give access to individually identifiable information only to those staff members who are required to fulfill these functions.

Program staff will not leave any file, either paper or computerized unsecured. Paper files containing children's information are kept in locked cabinets. Computerized files are not be left unattended and computers are kept in locked position or must be turned off when not being used.

Documents or files that contain personal information will be shredded if no longer needed by the program.

We are mandated reporters and are required to report instances of suspected child abuse or maltreatment when we are presented with reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or maltreatment. Personal information will be released to the Child Protective Service (CPS) unit of the local Department of Social Services if abuse is suspected without consent from the individual or individuals involved.

Documents prepared in the regular course of business are the property of the Watertown Family YMCA. These records may not be released without the express consent of the Branch Director, Chief Executive Officer or legal subpoena. All requests must be in writing on a form prescribed by the Watertown Family YMCA; a copy of the form can be obtained from the program's administrative office.

### **Individual Education Plan (IEP)**

If your child has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) a copy must be provided at the time the child is enrolled in the program. If the plan(s) are implemented after enrollment has begun, a copy must be provided to the site at the earliest date.

### **Serving Children with Special Needs**

A child with special needs is one who requires some form of special care due to physical, mental, emotional or health reasons. Children with special needs are also commonly referred to as children with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines a child with a disability more specifically as one who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits the child's ability to care for herself or himself, perform manual tasks, or engage in any other major life activity, such as walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, or learning, in an age-appropriate manner.

As a team, the YMCA SACC program will work together with families to determine what reasonable accommodations or modifications to the program are required to fully meet the needs of the individual child. Therapy or other professional services rendered by a third party will be coordinated with the site director. These persons will be required to sign in and out of the center, and to show identification. The parent or guardian will be asked to train staff on any special requirements, such as the use of equipment or medications. The team will meet on a routine basis to determine the child's success in the program and to evaluate the progress of the child. Certain conditions may require that the parent make themselves available during attendance hours.

A medical or professional statement of need will be required where applicable. A child will not be denied admission into the program without administrative approval of the child care branch director.

A denial of enrollment for a child will only occur under the following conditions:

- a. Enrolling the child into the program requires changes in policies, practices, or procedures that would fundamentally change the nature of the program and there are no reasonable alternatives available.
- b. A particular child's condition poses a direct threat to the health or safety of the disabled child or of any other children or staff and there is no reasonable way of eliminating the threat through changes in policies practices, procedures, equipment, or services.
- c. Accommodating the child's needs requires structural changes which are extremely expensive or difficult to carry out and there are no reasonable alternatives available.
- d. Accommodating the child's needs requires the provision of auxiliary aids and services which would fundamentally alter the nature of the program or would result in an undue burden (i.e., significant difficulty or expense) and there are no reasonable alternatives available.

As with all children, admission will also be dependent upon the availability of space in the program.



## **Attendance**

The SACC Program must know the days your child will attend. Parents are required to give notification of planned attendance. If your child will not attend on a regularly scheduled day, please call the Site Cell Phone and leave a message for your Site Director before contacting the SACC office.

## **Missing Child Procedure**

Attendance will be taken within the first ten minutes of school dismissal. If we expect your child and they do not arrive at SACC, these are the steps we follow for the safety and protection of your child:

If a child is expected and does not arrive at the program:

1. We will contact the child's teacher and the school office to see if they know where the child went or if there was a note sent from the parent and not received by the program, if the child went home early that day or was picked up.
2. If the child was sent home by bus or as a walker, we will immediately try to contact the parent or an emergency contact to make sure someone is home for the child or try to contact the bus to have the child brought back to SACC if the parent was not aware the child was sent home.
3. We will check the immediate school vicinity, bathrooms, hallways and outside to locate the child.
4. Contact the parents/guardians.
5. If the whereabouts of the child are not determined within 30 minutes of program attendance/school dismissal, we will call the police.

## **Child Drop Off and Pick Up Procedures**

Parents must come into the building to drop off / pick up their child. **Each child must be signed in and out every day.** If your child will **not** attend SACC on a *regularly* scheduled day, please call the Site Cell Phone and leave a message for your Site Director as well as call and notify your child's school.

- **Written Permission:** New York State licensing regulations requires that the program have written permission, from a child's parent/guardian, indicating specific individuals who will be allowed to pick-up their child(ren). Verbal permission, given over the phone, is not acceptable.
- **Photo Identification:** Photo identification is required of any individual requesting to pick up a child who is not recognized by a staff member. There may be new or substitute staff at a site so photo identification should be available at each pick up. Safety of the children we serve is our number one concern.
- **Parents Under the Influence:** If any staff member is concerned that a parent, guardian or other authorized pick up person has come into the program and may be under the influence of alcohol, drugs or other condition that could cause impairment while driving or in

supervision of the child, the Site Director will ask if there is an alternate person to notify to pick up the child. If this person does not allow an alternative person to pick up the child the Site Director may choose to call the police.

### **Visitor Control**

Each program will require all visitors to the facility to:

- sign in upon entry to the premises
- indicate in writing the date of the visit and the time of entry to the facility
- clearly state in writing the purpose of the visit
- sign-out upon departure from the facility indicating in writing the time of departure

Parents may visit the program at any time, please keep in mind that your visits should be announced to the site director and you must sign in on the visitor log.

### **Nutrition and Health**

Good Nutrition is important for the healthy growth of children and plays a role in learning. Menus for SACC are carefully planned and are available on the parent board for review. Children in the afternoon program receive a snack during the first 45 minutes of the afternoon program. Please indicate any dietary restrictions your child may have on the health forms and follow up with a conversation with the Site Director. The YMCA provides nutritious snacks according to CACFP guidelines and YMCA HEPA guidelines.

Snacks not provided by our program are prohibited without prior approval through our Administrative Office. If a snack from home is requested, a Special Needs form will have to be completed, which may also require medical documentation.

During the full day programs, lunches from home may be required. In the event this occurs, families are encouraged to adhere to the YMCA Healthy Lifestyles guidelines and provide your child with a meal that meets those standards. No fast food, soda or foods that need to be cooked or heated up will be allowed.

A daily check will be completed by the Site Director and Group Leaders to assess each child's general health and well-being. The staff will monitor children's comfort and safety throughout program hours of operation.

### **Illness and Injury**

If your child becomes ill while at SACC you will be notified. Dependent on severity you may be asked to pick up your child early. This is for your child's comfort and to prevent other children from being exposed. If you are not available and notification is needed, the emergency contact list will be used. Your child will need to be picked up no longer than 1 hour after notification.

The program reserves the right to determine if a child's condition makes it unsafe or improper for the child to remain in program.

At least one staff member at each site is trained in CPR and basic First Aid. If, in the opinion of the Site Director, your child needs immediate attention, an ambulance will be called to take your child to the hospital. Parents will be immediately notified of the situation.

## **Medications**

NO medications will be administered at SACC without written permission from the prescribing doctor and written permission from the parent. Prescribing doctor must give specific directions and times for dosages in instructions or medication request cannot be accepted. The YMCA will not administer the first dose of any medication.

### **REMEMBER: All paperwork must include:**

- Side effects insert from pharmacist must be given to the site.
- Medications must be given to SACC in the original container.
- Medications must be taken to the Site Director at the school site for review. They will then be locked away from children in a storage area.
- Written instruction specifying the quantity and time to be administered, the name and phone number of the prescribing doctor and any other instructions must accompany the medication. This includes the prescribing doctor's signed name and parent's signed note.
- Specific paperwork must be completed before any medication is administered. Paperwork must be filled out properly before your child may attend our program.

## **Staff**

Our staff follows NYS laws and regulations for the School Age Child Care Programs statewide. We continually strive for more skills and knowledge through YMCA and community training. All of our SACC staff members receive a background check through the Statewide Central Register for any suspected child abuse reports and are fingerprinted for criminal history through OCFS. All of our staff must demonstrate a genuine respect and love for children.

Our staff members receive at least 15 hours of training per year. Their training includes, but is not limited to the following areas:

- CPR/First Aid
- Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting
- Child Development
- Program Development
- Nutrition
- Health and Safety
- Communication

Our staff works as a team at each site to plan an environment that will be safe, creative and fun for each child. The staff is always willing to talk with parents or children about any concerns.

### **Licensing and Regulations**

The YMCA SACC Program is licensed with the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. YMCA policies and procedures as well as the NYS regulations are available for your review at any time, please see your Site Director. If you have any questions regarding the policies and procedures please contact the Program Director.

### **Children's Rights, Responsibilities and Discipline**

Good discipline is not punishment, it is guidance. Discipline takes a great deal of effort, time and patience.

The goal of the YMCA SACC program is to provide a supportive environment in which children can grow and develop. Positive child guidance management methods are used in this program.

#### **Children have a right to:**

- To be respected.
- To have a choice of activities and ample supplies.
- To have a safe and reliable environment.
- To have equipment in working order with all pieces.
- To express their creativity.
- To express emotions in an appropriate manner.
- To have staff members who care about and enjoy them.
- 

#### **Children must:**

- Respect the rights of self and others.
- Accept limits and rules.
- Understand that others have wants and needs. Use manners and courtesy as general behavior.
- Listen and be attentive in group situation.
- Accept responsibility for one's action.
- Have Fun!
- Listen and follow directions.
- Be considerate of everyone and take care of stuff.
- Ask permission for leaving group area.
- Follow all safety rules (gym, halls, outdoors).
- Follow all safety rules (gym, halls, outdoors).

When children are having difficulty following our rules, we will use the following disciplinary steps (**please see asterisk below as any physical or dangerous behavior is beyond the normal discipline routine\***):

- Verbal explanation to child that their behavior is inappropriate and Site Director will speak with child.
- Child may lose ability to choose their own activity. Staff will make this decision. Due to our discipline guidelines, SACC does not give "Time Out". This step may occur when the child is continuously being disruptive to the program.
- The staff will speak with the parents and discuss the child's behavior.
- The YMCA reserves the right to suspend from the program any child who consistently displays inappropriate behavior, is continually disruptive creating problems for other children, or who is physically aggressive.

**\*IF suspension of a child is related to safety concerns for program participants or staff, immediate suspension may occur and the program will not be required to follow all the steps listed-above.**

**Personal Items:** The SACC Program cannot take responsibility for personal items brought to the site. We encourage your child to make use of the many games and activities provided. We cannot be responsible for any items lost or stolen. Electronics including but not limited to cell phones are not allowed to be used during the program.

**Dress Code:** Children in our program have lots of energy and we provide both active inside and outside play. The children must be dressed appropriately for active play. Children may not play in the gym without sneakers. We take the whole program outside during all seasons. Please be sure your child is dressed weather appropriately. The "Winter 5" is required during our winter months: snow pants/snowsuit, winter jacket, winter hat, gloves/mittens, snow boots. These items will be required at regular SACC and during our Winter vacations and on Snow Day program days.

### **Family Rights and Responsibilities**

Parents play the most significant role in their child's growth and development. The YMCA is proud to provide a support system that will reflect a family's values and culture. The YMCA encourages parent participation. Open and friendly communication is essential. The children, staff and YMCA appreciate parent's creativity, ideas and leadership in activities and all issues related to your child's satisfaction with our program. Parent concerns should be immediately directed to the Site Director and to the SACC Administrative staff at the Fairgrounds YMCA. Details surrounding the concern will be reviewed, solutions will be discussed and an action plan will be implemented.

### **Communication is the best tool to guarantee your child's happiness...**

The YMCA program and Administrative Staff will always be available to talk to parents. You can reach administrative staff at the Fairgrounds YMCA at 585 Rand Drive, Watertown between the

hours of 8:30 am and 4:30pm Monday through Friday. The program staff at your child's site will be more than willing to speak to you at drop off and pick up time. If this is not convenient they will make an appointment to meet with you.

### **Family Rights and Responsibilities**

1. You and your child have a right to be treated in a non-discriminatory manner.
2. You and your child have the freedom to express and practice religious and spiritual beliefs, as long as these activities do not infringe on public order, or the safety of others.
3. Before school, a parent/guardian must accompany the child(ren) to the child care room, sign the child in, noting the time on the attendance sheet form. The parent/guardian should greet the supervisor so she/he knows that your child has arrived.
4. After school, the parent/guardian should sign the child out, noting the time and signing with a legal signature. Please let the supervisor know that the child is leaving.
5. Parents are responsible for notifying child care staff of their child(ren)'s schedule changes and absences, including calling in for sick days. The SACC Program reserves the right to terminate care for parents who continually neglect to call in absences to the childcare site.
6. Parents are responsible for submitting schedule changes to the Site Director in writing. Notification of full withdrawal must be made to the office in writing two weeks in advance.
7. Photo identification is required of any individual requesting to pick up a child who is not recognized by a staff member. Safety of the children we serve is our number one concern.
8. In the interest of safety, parents are responsible for making sure that their child's classroom teacher is informed of all changes and exceptions to his or her after school schedule
9. Parents are encouraged to familiarize their child with their daily schedules, including how to get to and from the child care room. This is especially important for the children who are bussed to and from child care sites not located at their home school. Procedures for getting children from the classrooms to the child care site will vary from school to school.
10. Parents should read the bulletin board at least once a week to note the curriculum plans for that week, program needs and the weekly snack schedule. This information will help you keep in touch with the program and your child's activities, and provide opportunities for conversation and sharing between you, your child and the staff.
11. Children are discouraged from bringing toys and other items to child care with them. SACC is not responsible for anything your child brings to child care (toys, eyeglasses, clothing, etc). The YMCA will not be able to reimburse you for any lost or stolen items.
12. The safety of your child is our first priority, therefore, if the person picking up your child appears to be under the influence of alcohol or other drugs or unable to drive safely, the following procedures will be implemented:
  - A. Child care staff will offer to call a taxi or another driver.
  - B. If the person insists on driving with your child, the staff person may call 911 to report the concern and provide information to ensure the child gets home safely.
13. You are welcome to visit the site at any time.
14. You should discuss with your Site Director the steps are taken in case of an emergency and where the emergency evacuation site is for the facility.

15. The YMCA reserves the right to suspend from the program any child who consistently displays inappropriate behavior, is continually disruptive creating problems for other children, or who is physically aggressive. Parents should familiarize themselves with our Discipline Policies. Any grievances will be help promptly.
16. You have a right to file a grievance at any time in accordance with the grievance procedures outlined in your parent handbook.

### **Grievance Procedures for Families**

A Grievance Procedure is the process by which solutions are sought to resolve disputes in an equitable and prompt manner. Grievances should be resolved as informally and quickly as possible by all parties involved and when this is not possible, a formal grievance procedure should be followed. Program applicants, participant and their family members have the right to express a grievance without interference or retaliation.

There are a number of avenues you can pursue if you have a grievance with our program.

1. You may visit the program at any time during operational hours to talk to staff about your child or any concerns you have about your child's care. If you will require a meeting which may take an extended time, we will gladly schedule a time outside of the program hours; to ensure that during program hours we are attentive to the children.
2. You may submit a formal grievance to the Branch Director at the administrative office located at 585 Rand Drive, Watertown, New York 13601 or the Chief Executive Officer of the Watertown Family YMCA located at 119 Washington Street, Watertown, New York 13601. All formal grievances will be reviewed by the Branch Director and Chief Executive Officer in a timely manner. Grievance should be submitted in writing in a timely manner. Detailed information should be provided so that the administration can properly review your concerns. Your grievance will be reviewed and we will contact you within two business days about your grievance. Upon request a timely written notification of the resolution and/or explanation will be provided.
3. The State Office of Children and Family Services maintains a toll-free complaint line for complaints about childcare programs. The Office is empowered to investigate any possible violation of child care regulations. Your complaint will be investigated and if it is substantiated, staff will work with the provider to correct any violations. If you wish to make a complaint, call: (800) 732-5207.

**Thank you for letting us serve your childcare needs. We are available for any concerns or questions you may have.**

## **Contact Us!**

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