



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

LEARN. PLAY. EXPLORE.

YMCA Day Camp Parent Handbook



TABLE OF CONTENTS

2

3	MISSION
3	PROGRAM OVERVIEW
3	HOURS, DAYS AND MONTHS OF OPERATION
3	Y STAFF TRAINING AND RATIOS
4	ACTIVITIES OFFERED
6	FIELD TRIPS AND SPECIAL EVENTS
6	SWIMMING AND WATER ACTIVITIES
6	TRANSPORTATION
7	DRESS CODE
7	MEALS AND SNACKS
8	ENROLLMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
8	ACCOUNTING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
8	ARRIVAL, DEPARTURE AND RELEASE PROCEDURES
9	CONDUCT POLICIES
10	HEALTH/SAFETY GUIDELINES, ILLNESS & EXLUSION & MEDICATION POLICY
11	ACCIDENT OR MEDICAL EMERGENCY
11	EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN
12	PARENTAL COMMUNICATION
12	FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
14	VOLUNTEERING AND PARENT ENGAGEMENT
14	ANIMALS
14	LICENSING AND CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

MISSION

3

The Y mission is to put Judeo-Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all. Everyone is welcome.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Y Summer Camp provides youth ages 5-15 (specific ages vary by location) with supervised activities designed to teach core values, conflict resolution and leadership skills. Campers have fun while making new friends, building self-confidence, appreciating teamwork and growing in self-reliance. The campers are placed into their respective age groups and taken through activities that are geared for their developmental level. Throughout the greater Houston area the YMCA has three types of camp available.

Child Care Licensed Summer Camp: Camps include a variety of activities such as group games, crafts, literacy, science, songs, swimming, physical activity and field trips.

Health Department Licensed Summer Camp: Camps include a variety of outdoor activities such as hiking, archery, BB guns, canoeing and ropes courses (high and low elements). Some activities require specific waivers be completed prior to camper participation. Campers also spend time in group game activities, literacy, science, swimming and sports.

Specialty Camps/Sports Camps: Full day camps designed for campers who are looking for a focus on a specific area of interest. Specialty camps (computers, music, science and more) and/or Y Sports Camps (focus on various individual and team sports) are offered at select Y Centers.

Even the rain will not stop the fun at Y Summer Camp. Our staff members are prepared for rainy days with many backup plan options including songs, skits, games and additional activities.

Our caring and competent staff offer positive reinforcement, safe surroundings, Christian values (caring, honesty, respect, responsibility and faith), fun and laughter, which in turn help bring these characteristics out in our campers.

HOURS, DAYS AND MONTHS OF OPERATION

Y Summer Camp is offered during the day, Monday through Friday, from the end of the school year in May/June to the beginning of the new school year in August. Hours vary from camp to camp, but typical hours are 6:30 or 7 am to 6 or 6:30 pm.

Y STAFF TRAINING AND RATIOS

All of our staff are required to attend 40 hours of training before working at camp. Their training hours are spent on CPR, first aid, character development, age-appropriate activities, bullying prevention, camper abuse awareness and a variety of other topics to ensure your children have a safe and fun experience at camp. The Y maintains a 1:10 staff to camper ratio for ages 6 and up. For campers under 6 years of age, our staff to camper ratio is 1:6.

ACTIVITIES OFFERED

4

The campers are placed into their respective age groups and taken through activities that are geared for their development level. At certain points during the day, campers are brought together for House activities, songs and/or special events.

A typical camp day includes:

- Arrival
- Opening Ceremonies or group activity
- Morning rotations of camp activities
- Lunch
- Literacy
- Afternoon rotations of camp activities
- Closing activity
- Departure

Camp rotations include opportunities for campers to learn, play and explore. Our focus on academic achievement consists of a fun and educational blend of literacy activities such as Camp Readers and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) activities to help campers learn to love nature and the way things work. Of course camp would not be complete without a healthy living emphasis in traditional camp activities of group games and sports, swimming, archery, canoeing, hiking, and arts and crafts.

Water breaks are provided during rotations and group transitions between rotations.

As part of a national effort to help combat childhood obesity, the YMCA of Greater Houston will limit the use of television, movies, digital devices and computers to no more than one hour per day and for educational purposes only.

Many children throughout our community lack access to the educational opportunities they need to succeed. Summer is a particularly critical time because children can lose two or more months of academic skills when not engaged in structured learning over their summer break. This phenomenon, known as summer learning loss, is most acute among high-needs students in under-resourced communities. The YMCA is helping to prevent this summer slide by providing enriching summer programs that build skills in math, science and literacy in fun and interactive ways.

Daily camper needs:

- Healthy snacks/lunch
- Water bottle (must have)
- Towel
- Spray sunscreen (staff do not directly apply to campers)
- Comfortable play clothes

- Bug spray (staff do not directly apply to campers)
- Cap/visor
- Swimsuit (Girls must wear a one-piece bathing suit. Boys must wear basic swim trunks.)
- Closed-toe/closed-heel athletic shoes
- Good attitude

Campers do not need:

- Cell phone
- Makeup
- Electronic device
- iPods, iPads, tablets or Mp3 players
- Toys/stuffed animals
- Money
- Weapons
- Trading cards
- Jewelry

All necessary personal items that come to camp should be clearly labeled with the camper's name. Items that are lost will be placed in a lost-and-found area. Due to our limited storage space, if items are not claimed by the end of the camp session, they will be donated to local charities.

Please remember we are not responsible for lost, misplaced or stolen items.

FIELD TRIPS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

6

Each child will receive one T-shirt when camp begins. Your child must wear his/her camp T-shirt on field trip days in order to participate.

You may purchase additional shirts for \$10 each.

Throughout the summer we will plan different trips/events to add something special to your camper's experience. Special activities may include programs, treasure hunts, talent shows, speakers and field trips. These will take place during the regular camp day and give your camper the total experience of Summer Camp. Field trips are fun and exciting outings that enhance your child's experience. Fees for field trips are included in the cost of camp. Campers cannot buy lunch or bring money on field trips.

Additional waivers may be required to participate in certain activities.

SWIMMING AND WATER ACTIVITIES

Campers will need appropriate swimwear (one piece swimsuit for girls and basic swim trunks for boys), a towel, goggles (if desired) and sunscreen. Spray sunscreen and swim shoes are recommended. Staff will encourage application of sunscreen but do not directly apply to campers. No water wings, inner tubes or other inflatable devices are allowed in Y pools. All campers will be swim tested daily to determine their swimming ability.

In 2015 the YMCA created our "Go For Green" water safety initiative. All campers not achieving a green swim band during testing will participate in the "Go For Green" program which allows us to provide free lessons to those campers. Five-year-olds will participate in our Go For Green initiative.

TRANSPORTATION

If your child is attending one of our programs that requires transportation, we ask that you speak with your child regarding proper safety guidelines. All campers must stay seated with their seat belts fastened until the vehicle is parked. Safety is our primary goal when transporting campers. The Y reserves the right to suspend or dismiss a student if safety policies are not followed.

Bus Rules and Regulations

While campers are on a bus, they are under the direct supervision of the driver and must obey him or her. The bus driver and staff have the authority to assign seats to students for safety or disciplinary reasons. Failure to follow the driver's rules at any time will be considered an act of disobedience and will result in disciplinary action.

For the child's own protection, hands, head, arms, and feet must be kept inside of the bus. Feet and bags must be kept clear of the aisle.

Conversation containing offensive language is not allowed. Campers should avoid any unnecessary or disruptive talking.

Fighting or horseplay is not permitted and will not be tolerated. General regulations pertaining to the use of tobacco, knives or other weapons, use of profanity and obscene gestures apply to all campers riding the bus.

Campers will be expected to help keep the bus clean, sanitary and orderly. Throwing paper or other debris on the floor of the bus or at other students is not acceptable. Throwing articles out of the bus windows or doors will not be permitted.

Damage to seats or other bus equipment must be paid for by camper's parents/guardians. Restitution or immediate arrangement thereof must be made before the child's bus riding privileges are restored.

Tampering with emergency doors or any other controls on the bus is not allowed. Opening or closing the front door is prohibited by anyone other than the driver.

No electronic devices are allowed on the bus. The bus driver and staff have the right to and will confiscate these articles brought onto the bus.

DRESS CODE

All campers must wear athletic shoes (no open-toed or open-heeled shoes), pants/shorts and a shirt. All clothing must be appropriate for camp activities.

MEALS AND SNACKS

Check with your local camp regarding meals and snacks.

Some centers will require campers to bring all of their own meals, snacks and water. We ask that campers not bring fried foods and foods high in sugar and saturated fats, such as chips, cookies, gummies, fried chicken nuggets, etc. In addition, we request that no outside food be brought into camp from local restaurants. We are unable to provide accommodation for meals that require refrigeration or heating/cooking.

Any meals and snacks given to campers will be healthy and meet licensing requirements. Water will be the primary beverage. No sugar drinks or juices will be served.

ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES AND POLICY CHANGE NOTIFICATIONS

All enrollment is completed electronically at ymcahouston.org/camps. Registration fees must be paid at the time of enrollment. Please allow time to complete your registration in one sitting as it will time out after 30 minutes.

The following items are needed to enroll:

- Your child's shot record
- Your child's school ID or lunch #
- Emergency contact information for someone other than yourself (not parent or guardian)
- Name, address, and phone number
- Release of contact information
- Payment information
- Registration fee
- Insurance information
- Doctor information

Notification of policy changes will be made in writing through newsletters and updated handbooks.

ACCOUNTING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

To avoid late fees, sessions must be paid in FULL by the Wednesday prior to the start of each session. No refunds or credits will be issued to anyone withdrawing once the session has started.

To ensure a spot for your child, we recommend you schedule your weekly payments for auto-draft.

Cancellations/program withdrawals must be made in writing and dropped off in person five days prior to the first day of that session. (A minimum of one week in advance). Registration fees are non-refundable.

ARRIVAL, DEPARTURE AND RELEASE PROCEDURES

Parents/guardians must sign their camper in and out each day.

Your camper will only be released to the persons listed on the emergency or authorized pick-up section of the enrollment form.

This person will be requested to show proper identification (Driver's License or government issued photo ID). Please bring your ID to the camp site. Only those designated on our enrollment form will be allowed to modify your information. All changes must be made with the program director.

If you indicate on your child's enrollment form that he/she may be released to a sibling under the age of 18, the sibling must be listed as an authorized person to pick up your child on the child's enrollment form.

In any case concerning a custody clause or dispute, court documents must be provided. These policies are in accordance with YMCA of Greater Houston and Texas Department of Family and Protective Service guidelines.

DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE PROCEDURES

9

Self-management skills and positive social interactions among campers and adults are encouraged and maximize everyone's enjoyment of camp. Programs use positive guidance methods including reminders, distraction, logical consequences and redirection.

Self-management skills are taught according to the following guidelines:

- Consistent rules are clearly stated. Campers are expected to work and play within known limits.
- Behavior expected of campers is age-appropriate and according to development level.
- An atmosphere of trust is established in order for campers to know that they will not be hurt nor allowed to hurt others.
- Staff members strive to help campers become acquainted with themselves and their feelings. This will help them learn to cope with their feelings and control them responsibly.

Camper safety is the most important concern of the program; therefore, campers whose behavior is dangerous or repeatedly disruptive must be immediately picked up from the program by someone designated through the departure and release procedures. Repeatedly disruptive or dangerous behavior will be discussed with the camper's parent and will result in loss of privileges or activities, suspension or termination from the program.

CONDUCT POLICIES

As in any activity, inappropriate behavior of a few campers can have a dramatic impact on the experience of the entire group. Therefore, the following conduct policies apply directly to each individual camper and will be used in determining the camper's eligibility to continue as a participant in the camp program. Infractions are documented in an incident/discipline report. Please make certain that both you and your child are completely familiar with these conduct policies.

A camper may be suspended or released from camp, without refund, for the following behavior while participating in the program or while being transported:

- Leaving the YMCA camp location without permission or going into unauthorized areas
- Using foul language, fighting, being rude or discourteous to staff and other campers
- Verbal or written threats to staff or other campers
- Defacing Y or school property or field facilities or any property visited such as Church, Park, or special event location
- Engaging in fighting, intentionally injuring another camper or bullying
- Bringing or using any illegal substances and/or weapons
- Public displays of affection
- Stealing or defacing another camper's property
- Refusing to remain with the group while at camp and during outings
- Refusing to follow check-in and -out procedures or refusing to follow basic rules of safety
- Refusing to participate in daily camp activities
- Not remaining seated at all times while being transported
- Not keeping seat belt fastened while being transported on a bus with seat belts.
Having any body part out of the window, defacing the vehicle and/or being rude and discourteous to the driver or to other drivers on the road while being transported.

Disciplinary procedure- the severity of the incident may result in immediate suspension or removal from the program

First Incident- Parent notified by director

Second incident - Disciplinary write-up

Third incident - The action taken at this point is at the discretion of the Director after appropriate consultation with the parent. (Range of discipline: one day suspension to removal from the program.)

HEALTH/SAFETY GUIDELINES, ILLNESS AND EXCLUSION AND MEDICATION POLICY**Health Check/Immunizations**

The YMCA of Greater Houston does not require child care staff to receive any additional immunizations in order to work with children. In order to ensure the health and safety of all, employees who work directly with children will follow required procedures to prevent the spread of exposure to disease:

- Wearing gloves when handling or cleaning body fluids, such as wiping noses, mouths, or tending sores
- Specifying that an employee with open wounds and/or any injury that inhibits hand-washing, such as casts, bandages, or braces, must not prepare food or have close contact with children in care
- Removing gloves and washing hands immediately after each task to prevent cross-contamination to other children
- Excluding the employee from direct care when the employee has signs of illness

All campers must have been examined within the past year by a licensed physician and must be mentally and emotionally able to participate in the program activities. Immunization information is required at the time of enrollment. Campers with food allergies are required to have an emergency plan in place. The camper's health care professional and parent must sign and date the plan. The plan should include: allergy, cause, severity and treatment.

General Health Practices

- Staff perform daily health checks to ensure children are healthy and to note any illness or injury.
- Campers with colds or illness will not be admitted. Please do not put us in the position of refusing your child.
- Campers with head lice will not be allowed to attend camp. Our camp follows the same guidelines as the public school system.
- All campers are required by the Texas Department of Health and Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to have current immunization record information on file. Campers age 4 are required to have a physical examination from a doctor on file.

- Please let us know immediately if your child has a communicable illness or infection. This will allow us to notify the parents of children attending our program. Campers with communicable conditions may not return to camp without a note from their physician.
- Prescription medications will not be administered unless a Medication Authorization Form has been filled out. All medication must be in the original container and a medication form must be completed. Over-the-counter medication will ONLY be administered if a doctor orders for the medication to be given. Medication will be administered during lunch.
- No camper may attend the program barefoot. All campers must wear closed-toe and closed-heel shoes at all times. Flip-flops and sandals are not safe in a camp environment. Campers will be sent home if this policy is not followed.
- A camper will only be released to those persons listed on the release forms in the enrollment information.
- All camp staff are required to check identification of anyone picking up or visiting campers. This includes parents, relatives and friends.
- Staff will not be permitted to transport any camper.
- Anyone working with children is required by law to report any suspected child abuse. This includes physical, sexual, emotional, mental abuse and neglect.
- Staff are not permitted to babysit or participate in non-Y organized activities with participants in the program.

ACCIDENT OR MEDICAL EMERGENCY

Our staff makes sure your camper's safety is their number one priority. Should your camper need medical attention, the Camp Director will try to notify you immediately. Parents are asked to notify the Program Director immediately of any change of address or telephone numbers. If parents cannot be reached, the Director has the authority to seek medical attention at the parent's expense.

If the situation is a major medical emergency, the Camp Director will call 911 immediately. The parents will assume fees for the emergency transportation. The YMCA takes head injuries seriously. Suspected head injuries will require a 911 call. Bumps, jolts or blows that cause the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth can be serious even if it appears to be minor.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN

Staff members are trained in basic emergency procedures. Necessary responses to issues regarding natural disasters (floods, tornados, hurricanes, etc.) and fire escape routes are addressed in staff training. Monthly fire drills and periodic tornado drills are conducted at sites. In the event of a gas leak, your child will be relocated and you will be notified immediately to come and get him/her. Each camp location has a lock down plan in place for how to handle and respond to a hostile or dangerous situation. At all times, we will place an emphasis on keeping children safe.

If the weather begins to worsen during the day, we will ask you to pick up your camper as soon as possible so you and our staff may get home safely. In the event of program cancellations due to inclement weather or facility issues that prohibit children from attending school, the YMCA recognizes three days of care as a full week of service. Based on this balance billing, accounts will be credited for a maximum of 3 days in any full week of cancellation.

PARENTAL COMMUNICATION

Open communication is very important to the success of your child's Y camp experience. Parents are welcomed visitors to our programs. Please check daily for posted notices, fliers or other information. We welcome your feedback regarding our program at any time. We appreciate your ideas regarding program expectations, suggestions and comments on ways to improve our service to you and your family.

You may direct suggestions, concerns, compliments and complaints to the immediate Camp Lead Staff, Camp Director, Senior Director, and Executive Director.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Y is community-based and believes that its programs and services should be available to everyone regardless of age, background, ability or income. The Y offers financial assistance to participants that is designed to fit your individual financial situation. The Y has two different types of financial assistance available.

Texas Work Force Solutions

To enroll for Summer Day Camp under Texas Workforce please follow these steps:

1. To determine eligibility for Workforce funding contact Work Force Solutions and complete the required paperwork.
2. Apply to the YMCA (If qualified a maximum of 30% will be awarded)
3. Provide an acceptance/denial letter to the YMCA.
4. If accepted, YMCA will adjust account for NCI payments and parent co-payments.
5. If denied, YMCA will reassess original application and determine if an increased percentage is needed and available.

Child Care Licensed Summer Camps who are vendors with Work Force Solutions include:

- Alief Family YMCA
- Duncan Family YMCA
- EA Smith Family YMCA
- Galveston Family YMCA – Parker
- Houston Texans Family YMCA
- Huntsville Family YMCA
- South Lake Houston
- MD Anderson Family YMCA
- Monty Ballard Family YMCA
- Perry Family YMCA
- The Woodlands Family YMCA @ Branch Crossing
- Thelma Ley Anderson Family YMCA
- Texas Medical Center YMCA
- Trotter Family YMCA Day Camp
- TW Davis Family YMCA
- University Park YMCA Day Camp
- Wendel D Ley Family YMCA Day Camp
- West Orem Family YMCA

Annual Campaign

To enroll in Summer Camp using YMCA Annual Campaign dollars completed Financial Assistance applications and supported documents may be accessed from the YMCA of Greater Houston website at www.ymcahouston.org and applications may be submitted to your local YMCA.

Please allow 2 weeks for your application to be processed once you have submitted a completed application.

Limited financial assistance is available to individuals and families who substantiate a need.

Camps licensed through the Texas Department of State Health Services include:

- Conroe Family YMCA
- D. Bradley McWilliams Family YMCA
- Fort Bend Family YMCA
- Harriet & Joe Foster Family YMCA
- Lake Houston Family YMCA
- Langham Creek YMCA
- Langham Creek Family YMCA @ Bridgeland
- Mark A. Chapman YMCA @ Katy Main Street
- Monty Ballard Family YMCA @ Camp Cinco Ranch
- Tellepsen Family YMCA
- The Woodlands Family YMCA @ Oak Ridge Baptist Church
- The Woodlands Family YMCA @ Shadowbend
- TW Davis Family YMCA @ Jones Creek Ranch
- Vic Coppinger Family YMCA
- Weekley Family YMCA

VOLUNTEERING AND PARENT ENGAGEMENT

Parents are welcome to participate with their children in a variety of activities. Parents and volunteers need to have cleared a criminal and/or FBI background check based on licensing and YMCA requirements in order to volunteer in a Y camp program. Parents and volunteers will also need to complete an online child abuse recognition and awareness training. Parents and volunteers are never left alone with a group of children.

As your child learns and grows with us, we hope that you will choose to participate in parent engagement activities during the summer. We hope you will attend an orientation prior to camp and summer family events to meet your child's new friends. We will plan activities to help families be physically active and learn healthy eating/nutrition habits. Please read our newsletters and watch for tips to help your family be healthy and active.

ANIMALS

Parents and campers will be notified if their campsite has animals. All animals will be current in vaccinations and visits to the vet. Health records from the vet visits will be available for your review. Personal pets or animals are not allowed at camp.

LICENSING AND CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

YMCA Camps are licensed through one of two state agencies.

- The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), Child Care Licensing Division www.dfps.state.tx.us
800-862-5252
A copy of minimum standards from this department is available for your review at the camp.
- Texas Department of State Health Services
Youth Camp Division
512-834-6600

Y staff are trained in recognizing and reporting suspected child abuse and neglect. Staff are required by law to report suspected abuse or neglect. The child abuse hotline is 800-252-5400.

The YMCA of Greater Houston is committed to keeping all children safe and we make every effort to prevent child abuse. The Y recognizes that child abuse exists in a number of forms, including emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, as well as child neglect. As mandated reporters, it is our responsibility to recognize and report all suspected child abuse to the appropriate authorities.

To help prevent child abuse the YMCA of Greater Houston has implemented the following procedures:

1. For the safety of children entrusted in our care, the YMCA conducts and requires a background check and references for all camp staff, as well as every person employed in or by our centers and programs.

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2. Allegations or suspicions of child abuse are taken seriously and are reported to the police and state agencies for investigation.
 3. YMCA programs are structured and observed so that staff and volunteers are never the only adult present with children with the possible exception of emergency situations.
 4. Evaluations are conducted with parents regarding day to day experiences, encouraging reports of any event out of the ordinary.
 5. Staff are required to report all incidents and/or the disclosure of abuse.

A key to keeping children safe is a child's ability to seek help. They need to know that there are adults at the Y, and at home, who will listen and respond in a supportive way. It is important to be aware that child abusers can be parents, caretakers, friends, neighbors, or even other youth.

1. Talk to your child – Share with your child that he or she can say “NO” to an adult friend, family member, or an older child, if they act inappropriately.
2. Be Proactive – Create an environment that encourages children to share their views and concerns. Then really listen to them. Establish safety rule online and offline.

If faced with your child disclosing abuse, or if there is a situation where you suspect abuse, but are not sure or don't have proof, call the child abuse helpline and get support. Trust your gut and your instincts and take action immediately.

If you would like to report a suspicion that a child has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed by abuse or neglect, call the **Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400. IF YOU BELIEVE A CHILD IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER OF HARM, CALL 911 FIRST.** Thank you for helping us keep our children safe.