# Our Philosophy

Youth Center Inc. is steadfast in its approach to fulfill its mission of

# providing community-based educational, recreational, and social activities in

# a safe, supportive environment. Our goal is to ensure that young people

# grow up to be productive citizens by using the foremost youth development

# best practices. By employing innovative, cutting-edge operations; we have

# advanced by providing effective outcomes to the youth and families we serve.

# Youth Center Inc. programming aims to help young people build positive

# connections within their families, schools and communities

# Statement of Purpose

# Youth Center Inc. is based in Cheshire, Massachusetts established for the purpose of giving the youth in our communities a safe and supportive environment. We service Northern Berkshire County and offer preschool programming and after school support. Our preschool program is for ages 2 years 9 months’ to5 years old and our afterschool program is for youth grades K-8. We offer homework time, a snack, educational activities and programs, and free time inside and outside.

We believe that mentoring and building strong relationships with the youth that attend our program is our core strength. We collaborate with many community organizations to provide the youth with a robust program. One of the organizations we collaborate heavily with is 4-H. Through their Tech Wizards mentoring grant, we receive instructors/mentors and materials for STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) related classes. Also, included in these programs are family nights, where the kids build stronger relationships with their family by demonstrating what they have been doing at the Youth Center!

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

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

**Administrative organization of programs**

Board of Directors

Sonia DiSanti, Director

Monica Carpenter, Program Director

Monica Carpenter, Preschool Director/ Site Coordinator

Hayley Simard, leader teacher/ site coordinator

Courtney Peto, Lead preschool teacher

Christina Zustra, group Leader

Kelli Miller, group leader

Mandy Sheppard, group leader

Heather DiSanti, group leader

Lee Gagnon, group leader

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

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

# Intake and Enrollment

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

**Waiting List**

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

**Transitioning**

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

**Follow Up**

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

**Hours of Operation For after school program**

Youth Center Inc. is open Monday through Friday from 6:30am-8:30am & 2:00 p.m.-

6 p.m. with various programs available (half days and afterschool). For preschool, Holidays and School vacations we are open 6:30am-6:00 pm.

Before Care is available Monday-Friday 6:30am-8:30am (bus arrival)

**Holiday Closings**

Independence Day

Labor Day

Thanksgiving Day

Christmas Day

New Year’s Day

Memorial Day

**WE CLOSE EARLY ON CHRISTMAS EVE AND NEW YEARS EVE**

**Fees: Regular Programming**

The Afterschool Program is $65.00/week.

Before care is $30.00/week.

There is a late fee of $1.00 per every 1 minutes after 6:00pm the late fee needs to be paid on the day of service. If payment is not received for two week the child may be suspended from the program.

**Fees:** Vacation/Fun weeks

$30 a day for members.

$40 a day for non-members.

**Fees: Summer Programming**

$30 a day from 8:30am-6pm.

$6 a day from 6:30am-8:30am

**Fees: Additional**

These fees must be paid **by the Friday before the** program begins.

On occasion there may be an additional fee for field trips

Return check fee is $25.00.

**Late Pick Up Policy**

The Youth Center after School Program closes each day at 6:00 p.m. When an occasion arises that a parent is going to be late the Youth Center has established these firm policies:

* Parents must call the Youth Center to let us know what time they will be picking up their child, or to inform us of other pick up arrangements that will be made.
* If late pick up is on a constant basis, a meeting will be set up with the Director and the parent to discuss further enrollment of their child in the program.
* In the event that the Youth Center **DOES NOT** receive a prior phone call from the parent, these policies will be immediately implemented:
  + Youth Center Enrichment staff will contact the parent(s) for instructions. If a parent cannot be reached, the staff member will call an emergency contact person to arrange pick up for the child.
  + By 6:30pm if contact has not been made to either parent or emergency contact, a call will be placed to the Director and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Emergency Unit to report an abandoned child. The staff member will then follow instructions by DCF as to where to bring the child. The parent will be informed upon arrival as to where his/her child may be found by the Director.

**A LATE FEE OF $1.00 PER MINUTE WILL BE CHARGED AFTER 6 PM.**

**Parent visitation and communication**

A parent may visit unannounced at any time while their child is present. Parents are welcomed to communicate any problems, concerns or suggestions with the site coordinator or director at any time, by phone or in person.

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

**Children’s records**

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

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

**Progress Reports**

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

**Plan for Child Guidance**

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

Basic rules and expectations include:

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

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

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

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

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

**Termination or Suspension of Enrollment**

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

1. Under the following circumstances it may be necessary to *suspend*a child’s enrollment at Youth Center Inc.:

1. Failure to provide health information as mandated by EEC.
2. Any other issue that may compromise the health and safety of students/staff or that disrupts the effectiveness of the program.
3. Being more than 2 weeks behind in payments.

2. Under the following circumstances it may be necessary to *terminate* enrollment:

1. The continued enrollment of the child would risk physical danger to himself/herself, to the other children and/or staff.
2. Excessive lateness in payments, with no attempt to explain or rectify the situation with the center.
3. Inappropriate or abusive behavior on the part of the child or the parent.

Youth Center Inc. will provide parents with an opportunity to meet with our program director or Director, and discuss other options other than termination or suspension. Also the center will provide support to the families by advising them on services in our area that may be helpful.

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

**Situations Requiring Referrals**

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

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

**Mandated Reporting of Abuse and Neglect**

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

**Medication** 7.11(2)

Youth Center Inc. shall not administer prescription or non-prescription medication to a child without written authorization from the parent and physician. The physician may give a standing order listing the medication(s), dosage, and criteria for administration. This order will be valid for no more than one year from the date it was signed. For non-prescription medications, Youth Center Inc. may accept as the written parental authorization a signed statement authorizing the center to administer non-prescription medication in accordance with the written order of the physician.

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

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

**In Case of Serious Illness/Emergency**

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

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

**Illness**

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

Chicken pox Meningitis Viral Hepatitis Tuberculosis

Mumps Rubella Rabies

Giardiasis Whooping Cough Measles COVID-19

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

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

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

* Discharges from the eyes (e.g. conjunctivitis)
* A rash or open sores on the body.
* Any symptoms of communicable disease including flu & strep throat.

New Symptom list

1. The following new symptoms, if observed in a child or staff member are cause for immediate isolation and exclusion from child care:

* a. Fever (100.0° and higher), feverish, had chills
* b. Cough
* c. Sore throat
* d. Difficulty breathing
* e. Gastrointestinal distress (Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea)
* f. New loss of taste or smell
* g. New muscle aches

2. The following symptoms, if observed in combination with symptoms from (1), are cause for immediate isolation and exclusion from child care:

* a. Fatigue
* b. Headache
* c. Runny nose or congestion (not due to other known causes, such as allergies)
* d. Any other signs of illness two consecutive episodes of diarrhea (unless caused by antibiotics)

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

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

**Chronic Illness and Allergies**

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

**Transportation**

Before School children will be dropped off and signed in by their guardian. Youth Center staff will bring children to their bus stop and ensure they get on the bus. Youth Center Staff will meet children at their bus stop in the afternoon and walk children to their classroom at the Youth Center.

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

Parents will need to sign a written transportation plan.

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

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

**Emergencies and Evacuation**

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

**Programs & Activities**

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

* Gardening
* Nature Exploration
* Survivor
* Minute to win it
* Silly Science
* Architectural Legos
* Photography
* Wood Burning and trail marking
* Sewing Creations
* Cooking with Equation
* Fishing
* reading group
* Arts and Crafts
* Board games and card games
* Group Games inside and outside

**Daily Routines**

**Sign Out**

The classroom staff will sign-in/ take attendance of the afterschool program students at the bus stop and again at their classroom. At the end of the day, please remember to sign the attendance sheet in your child’s classroom that you and your child are leaving.

**Healthy Habits**

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

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

Carrot/Celery sticks Rice and vegetables Chicken slices/fingers

Yogurt Green Salad Tuna salad/sandwich

Cheese sticks Bagels Pizza with vegetables

Fruit Pasta and Vegetables

Applesauce Granola Bars without candy

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

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

Cold packs in their lunch boxes will keep foods cold until lunchtime.

**Health Care Policy**

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

**Visitors**

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

**Emergency Plan**

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

**Heat**

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

**Water**

In the event that the water supply cannot be used and toilets cannot be flushed, the center will close until the problem is corrected. Drinking water is provided by a bubbler in each classroom.

**Fire**

In the event of fire, a designated staff will grab a first aid kit and we will follow the fire evacuation procedure in each room. In the event that the primary exit is blocked, we will use the secondary exit. Maps for each are located in each room. If we are unable to return to the building, we will walk the children to the senior center in Cheshire. After congregating in their hall, the staff will begin to call the parents/guardians to come and pick up their children.

**Loss of Power**

In the event that the Youth Center loses electrical power, the children will remain in their classrooms with the staff until the power is back on.

Should a child need to use the bathroom, emergency lighting lights the halls and a staff will accompany that child. Should the power remain out for a long period of time, and the temperature in the building goes below 65 degrees, parents/guardians will be called to take their children home for the day. Staff will remain until all children have been dismissed to their parents/guardians.

**Natural Disaster**

In the event of natural disaster (i.e. flood, twister), the Director or person in charge will contact the Cheshire Police Dept. to advise the program on the conditions. The number for the police dept. is 413-743-1501. The staff will remain calm and with the children until they can be returned safely to their parents. If enough warning is given, parents will be called and children will be sent home. The Program Director or person in charge of the program on this day will be responsible for contacting parents. Staff will remain with any children who are not dismissed to their parents/guardians.

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

**Missing Child:**

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



Parents Handbook