



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

YMCA of Greater Springfield Y-AIM Program Parent Handbook

OUTREACH PROGRAM SITES

North End Outreach Center 1772 Dwight Street, Springfield
Downtown Outreach Center 275 Chestnut Street, Springfield

www.springfieldy.org

Welcome

We are so pleased that you have chosen the YMCA's Y-AIM TEEN & OUTREACH Programs for your youth. By working together throughout the year, you can feel secure in the knowledge that your youth is enjoying a unique, structured program that reinforces the Four Core Values of the YMCA (Caring, Honesty, Respect & Responsibility) and offers innovative enrichment opportunities. Parents are welcome to visit the program unannounced at any time when their youth are present.

The YMCA Parent Handbook is designed to help you and your youth smoothly transition into the program and supply you with the needed information regarding policies and procedures as required by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH). A copy of the YMCA Parent handbook will be made available at all sites for reference when you have questions. We look forward to working together to make this a great year.

If at any time you have questions, please do not hesitate to stop in our office or contact us by phone at 413-739-6955 Ext. 2155.

Philosophy

Y-AIM; Aiming for academic, social, economic, and physical health

The YMCA of Greater Springfield is committed to our youth and believes that our staff serves as an extension of your family. The youth participate in activities that foster healthy growth and development, in a safe and constructive environment.

Programming consists of daily activities that foster relationships that offer opportunities for the developmental growth of each youth. We focus on physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development.

Goals

Achieve academically

Inspire to attend college

Move toward personal, family and community advancement

The YMCA of Greater Springfield is committed to providing a program of creative, innovative & engaging learning experiences through supervised activities in which youth will voluntarily participate and which provide an opportunity for the youth's development.

The goal of Y-AIM programming is to create an environment that fosters opportunities for the development of the youth in the areas of:

- Arts and Humanities
- Character Development
- Global Learning
- Health, Wellness and Fitness
- Homework Assistance
- Social Competence and Conflict Resolution
- STEM
- Service Learning

The Y-AIM Programs work to promote a more effective on-going family unit and improve the quality of your family's life. Please see the Center Advocates for resources related to social services currently partnered with the YMCA.

Non-Discrimination

The YMCA of Greater Springfield does not discriminate in providing services to youth and their families based on race, sex, religion, cultural heritage, political beliefs, marital status, national origin, sexual orientation, and/or disability.

Program Information

All YMCA of Greater Springfield Y-AIM programs are governed by Department of Public Health Guidelines and are mandated to uphold all rules and regulations. Parents may contact DPH at the number listed below for information regarding this center's compliance history.

DPH promotes the health and well-being of all residents by ensuring access to high-quality public health and healthcare services, and by focusing on prevention, wellness, and health equity in all people.

Address

250 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108

Phone

Main [\(617\) 624-6000](tel:(617)624-6000)

TTY/TDD [\(617\) 624-6001](tel:(617)624-6001)

Outreach Center

Hours of Operation: Monday-Friday from 10am-6pm*

During program hours, youth will have the opportunity to have a healthy snack, start their homework, participate in creative and fun activities, as well as physical activities and/or outside time, when permitted. You can obtain a monthly calendar at your youth's specific site with activities and planned events.

The YMCA of Greater Springfield, Springfield Public Schools, Big Y Foods, and other local business partners have come together to transform the lives of our youth in response to the drop-out rate, poor attendance, and low advancement rates of students in the Greater Springfield area.

Y-AIM provides talented and underachieving at-risk youth who are entering middle school with a solid support system through middle and high school. This support system serves as a means to ensure graduation from high school, pursuit of higher education, and access to gainful employment in the global marketplace.

Enrollment Procedures

To enroll your youth in a YMCA Teen & Outreach program, the YMCA requires all registration paperwork to be complete and legible prior to your youth's first day in the program. Registration can be found with your youth's Guidance counselor or at each Outreach Center. Attendance of program is

not allowed if your youth did not attend school during the day or is suspended from school, due to any behavior.

All registration paperwork can either be brought to the Education Department at the YMCA of Greater Springfield or to any of the Outreach Centers.

*******Special note:**

It is required that we have on file an up-to-date telephone number where parents can be reached during program hours. We must also have an emergency number for an alternate person who can be reached if the parent is unavailable. These numbers must be kept up to date. Please notify the Education Desk in Springfield, in writing whenever phone numbers have changed.

Field Trip Fees & Vacation Week

Outreach Center operate during any vacation week 12pm-6pm. Field trip expenses are not always included in our program. Field trip fees will be included in a written permission form in advance of all field trips. All fees must be paid in advance of field trips.

To sign up for a field trip participation in programming is required. Deadlines set for fieldtrip are strictly enforced to account for ticket confirmation and staffing ratio. Exceptions cannot be made.

Generally, fieldtrips are planned for the December, February and March vacation weeks. These forms are passed out at the site your youth attends.

YMCA Plan for Behavior Management

Discipline and guidance shall be consistent and based on an understanding of the individual needs and the level of development of each youth. The goal of all behavior management is to maximize the growth and development of self-discipline, while ensuring the safety of the group. Outreach Centers are a place for youth to feel safe and learn life skills. If your youth does not accept these expectations, they will be asked to leave the center for the day or for an adequate period of time.

Any behaviors which threaten the physical and/or emotional safety of the youth, other youth, or staff (such as hitting, biting, verbal assault, kicking, throwing objects, pushing, temper tantrums, etc.) will result in appropriate consequences, including but not limited to discussion of actions with staff & parent/guardian, discussion about how to make better choices, suspension or termination from YMCA programming.

At no time will a behavioral incident be dealt with in a demoralizing, humiliating, or abusive manner. No youth will be subject to neglect, cruel, unusual, severe, or corporal punishment including: punishment which subjects a youth to verbal abuse, ridicule or humiliation, denial of food, rest, or use of bathroom facilities, punishment for soiling or wetting, relating to or not eating food. No staff member shall be subject to verbal or physical abuse by a youth enrolled in the program. This includes humiliation, foul or abusive language or ridicule.

The YMCA has zero tolerance for offenses of physical violence, bullying, inappropriate and foul language. Severe infractions are reviewed by the Director, per their discretion severe enough infractions may result in automatic suspension/termination.

Youth Guidance Policy

Youth guidance shall be consistent and based on an understanding of the age, individual needs and development of each youth. The goal of all youth guidance is to maximize the growth and development of self-control, while ensuring the safety of the group at all times.

Care will be taken that all rules and limits are clearly explained to the youth frequently so that the youth understand them and so that they feel secure that the adults in charge care enough to keep them safe. Developmentally appropriate methods of behavioral management will be used in dealing with inappropriate behaviors. These methods include use of the following consistent and progressive techniques, distraction, redirection, gentle reminders, offering acceptable choices, natural consequences or if needed, relocation to a different activity center to give them an opportunity to relax and renew self-control away from the situation.

Bullying Policy

General Statement

The YMCA of Greater Springfield core values are **caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility**. As a priority we are addressing bullying. The Y does not tolerate any form of bullying. We will investigate all reports and complaints of bullying, including cyber bullying and will take prompt effective action to end that behavior and prevent its reoccurrence. This prohibition includes anyone associated with the YMCA including but not limited to members, staff, administrators, parents, program members, and guests.

The Y will perform all due diligence with regards to bullying response and prevention, including penalties for false claims. This policy is in addition to our behavior modification plans for all youth programs and code of conduct for members and guests.

Our efforts to prevent bullying includes: staff training, program curriculum, and an association taskforce to keep current on training and research.

Definition of Bullying

The YMCA of Greater Springfield will use a modified version of the state definition and defines "Bullying" as the following:

The repeated use by one or more students/members/participants [aggressor(s)] of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- ❖ causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property
- ❖ places the target in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself or of damage to his/her property
- ❖ creates a hostile environment at within our programs or facilities for the target
- ❖ infringes on the rights of the target within our programs or facilities
- ❖ significantly disrupts a program or membership benefits or the orderly operation of a program or at a Y facility.

Definition of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying, using technology or electronic devices such as cell phones, computers, video gaming systems and the Internet.

Cyberbullying, like bullying in the physical world, may include:

- ❖ Sending hurtful, hateful, derogatory, harassing or threatening messages to others
- ❖ Spreading rumors
- ❖ Sending personal or embarrassing information about or pictures of others – all with the intention of intimidating, frightening, ridiculing, or harming someone else.

Y Reporting Procedures

All Y staff are mandated youth abuse reporters. In the event they witness an act of bullying, they are to immediately intervene and notify their direct supervisor. If it is reported to a staff member, the staff is to notify their immediate supervisor and an investigation will take place within 24 hours of notification, including notifying parents if the alleged victim/aggressor is a minor.

Forms and flow charts related to the Y's bullying policy and reporting procedures are available on our website www.springfielddy.org

Termination Policy

When the health, welfare and/or safety of a youth, other youth, or staff are at stake, the YMCA reserves the right to terminate youth care services immediately. Possible reasons for suspension and/or termination from youth care services are:

- Inappropriate physical and/or verbal behavior by a youth or parent
- Is dangerous to him/herself
- Is dangerous to others in the center
- Does not want to participate in the program
- Is unable to benefit from the program
- Is excessively and repeatedly disruptive to others
- Is unable to follow the rules and expectations of the center
- Repeatedly uses offensive or obscene language (this will also apply to parents)
- Repeatedly damages materials
- Is abusive to others
- Inappropriate parental behavior towards staff or any program participants

Special Notes:

Termination from the program will not be conducted or treated as a punishment. Every effort will be made to balance the interests of the individual youth as well as the center. However, ultimately, the interests of the program shall be given priority. Throughout the termination process, close communication will be maintained with the parent.

Transportation Policy

The YMCA provides transportation to home from Outreach Center Program sites each day. Monitors are provided on each YMCA vehicle for your youth's safety. A bus pass may also be given to youth, depending on their home address.

Disruptive behavior by a youth on the van/bus is a serious safety concern and may cause the youth to forfeit their right to transportation. This includes not remaining in seat, swearing or arguing, fighting, unnecessary noise, throwing trash out of window, hanging arms out of window and not following instructions of driver or monitor.

The following procedures will be used for a youth with disruptive behavior:

- The monitor or driver will speak to the youth about their behavior.
- If the behavior continues the youth will be assigned a seat at the front of the bus or with the monitor.
- If the youth refuses to move their seat and/or continues the behavior, a bus behavior report will be filled out and youth will be suspended from the bus or center depending on infraction.

If there are extenuating circumstances, the Transportation Coordinator should be contacted for assistance. If severe violence is involved, it may result in immediate suspension or termination from the program.

Accidents/Violations

The Transportation Coordinator will report all moving violations and accidents that occur while youth are being transported to our insurance company and the Registry of Motor Vehicles. A designated YMCA staff will notify parents or guardians. If a moving violation or accident occurs while using transportation provided by the YMCA or a subcontractor, the Site Coordinator will notify the YMCA Executive Director and the Transportation Coordinator at 739-6955.

Youth Injuries

If a youth is injured during the daily activities and if the injury is minor, a YMCA staff member certified in First Aid will administer first aid. If the injury requires outside medical attention, and is serious (life threatening), the youth will be taken to the emergency room at the hospital by ambulance. The parent will be called and should meet them at the emergency room. If the injury requires medical attention, but is not serious, parent may choose to pick their youth up at the center. An incident report will be filled out on all injuries -- minor or major.

Special note:

It is required that we have on file an up-to-date telephone number where parents can be reached during program hours. We must also have an emergency number for an alternate person who can be reached if the parent is unavailable. These numbers must be kept up to date. Please notify the Center whenever phone numbers are changed.

Please refer to the Healthcare Policy and Procedure Guide for more comprehensive information.

Policy for Reporting Abuse & Neglect of Youth

Youth abuse is damage to a youth for which there is no "reasonable" explanation. Youth abuse includes non-accidental physical injury, neglect, sexual molestation and emotional abuse.

The increasing incidence of reported youth abuse has become a critical national concern. It is a special concern of the YMCA because of the organization's role as an advocate for youth and its responsibility for enhancing the personal growth and development of both youth and adults in all YMCA programs.

For the protection of their youth, families, members and employees, the YMCA of Greater Springfield has established policies to aid in the prevention and reporting of youth abuse cases.

Any parent may request a complete copy of the YMCA Youth Abuse Policy. All YMCA Youth Care Staff are mandated Reporters to suspected cases of youth abuse. This includes the reporting of parents who appear to be impaired by drugs or alcohol.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT INFORMATION

The General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts mandates to the Department of Early Education and Care the legal responsibility of promulgating and enforcing rules and regulations governing the operation of family youth care, small group and Y-AIM and large group and Y-AIM youth care.

These regulations, 606 CMR 7.00, establish standards for operation of family youth care, small group and Y-AIM and large group and Y-AIM youth care programs in the Commonwealth. The regulations require certain things of licensees (program owner) regarding their work with families. A summary of the required parent information, rights, and responsibilities are identified below.

Family Involvement

The following 606 CMR 7.08 requirements apply to all programs, including family youth care, small group and Y-AIM and large group and Y-AIM youth care. Additional requirements for family youth care are found at 606 CMR 7.08(9). Additional requirements for small group and Y-AIM and large group and Y-AIM youth care are found at 606 CMR 7.08(10).

The licensee must support and encourage a partnership with and the involvement of parents in the early education and care of their youth.

Parent Communication

The licensee must develop a mechanism for and encourage ongoing communication with parents, and must be able to communicate effectively with families whose primary language is not English or who require alternative communication methods.

Parent Suggestions

Your questions, suggestions and concerns are important to the success of our program. If a staff member is not free to talk with you immediately, please leave your name and phone number, and someone will call you as soon as possible. A meeting can be scheduled.

Remember, you are your youth's advocate. You should tell the staff if your youth is having any difficulty at the Center. If your youth exhibits inappropriate behavior at the center, the Director and staff need your input. Let them know if changes occur at home that are affecting your youth's mood or behavior. Do not let a potential problem arise and grow. Also, if your youth enjoyed a particular event or project and you appreciate something special at the center, please tell the staff. If you need a Spanish translator, the Assistant Director will be available.