



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS**  
OF MERCER COUNTY

After School Program Handbook  
2020-2021 School Year



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**After School Program Handbook**

This handbook is intended to provide information to Parents of the After School Program members about club operations and policies. It is not a contract between parents and the Club, and is subject to revision at any time, without prior notice. **Please refer to our website for the latest updates and procedures in relation to COVID 19. Visit us at [www.bgcmercer.org](http://www.bgcmercer.org)**

**Mission**

To enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, and responsible citizens.

**Enrollment**

All children must be members of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County in order to enroll in the after school program. Membership dues are \$30 per year. This membership also allows you to take advantage of other Club programs.

Parents/guardians must complete the entire enrollment package before your child may start the after school program. Enrollment package may be found online at [www.bgcmercer.org](http://www.bgcmercer.org) .

**Ages**

The after school program is open to children in Kindergarten (*must be potty trained*) through middle school.

**Curriculum**

Students in grades K-8 will have the opportunity to participate in activities that will include homework assistance (*Power Hour*), art instruction, STEM activities, sports, cooking, and special interest clubs.

The after school curriculum rotates in 12 week program cycles (Fall, Winter, Spring) during the school year.

Nutritional snacks are served daily.

Professional staff will lead activities with 20-25 students per group (less during the Covid-19 pandemic), with a teacher assistant to keep, at most, a 15:1 student to teacher ratio

**Monthly Tuition**

Tuition is due by the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. Late fees will be assessed on all payments received after the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month. We encourage all parents to use our auto-deduct credit card tuition program or to sign up for an account to pay online. This eliminates fees and provides for a smooth payment process.

**Late Policy Payment**

A late fee of \$25 will be charged if payment is not received by the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month. Parents/Guardians delinquent in payment will be informed by the program staff not to return to program until all late fees have been paid.

**A \$35.00 fee will be charged for checks returned for insufficient funds. If more than one check is returned for insufficient funds, only Credit/Debit Cards, Money Orders or Cash will be accepted as payment.**

**Tuition Assistance**



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The Club works extremely hard each year raising hundreds of thousands of dollars to enable everyone to take advantage of our programs and services. Please complete a sliding fee scholarship application if you need assistance in paying for the after school program. Your fee would then be based on the number of children you are registering and income level. Many parent/guardians also get funding help from the Division of Youth and Family Services, Social Services and/or Child Care Connection.

Let us know how we can help you.

**Transportation**

The Club will provide free daily transportation from a number of schools in Trenton/Ewing/Lawrence to its Centre Street and Spruce Street locations. Call the Club for specific bus routes and schools. The Club's transportation works like a city bus. Your child must be ready and waiting at the designated bus stop ready for pick up.

All children will have to go through a daily health screening conducted by a staff member before leaving the school premises and boarding the bus. This will include some simple health questions, temperature reading, and observation. Any children that have a temperature of 100.40 or above or show any sign of illness will not be allowed to board the bus and will have to stay under the supervision of the school until parents are notified.

Please remember, transportation to the program is a privilege. Remind your child that good van/bus behavior is a matter of safety. Children are expected to display appropriate behavior on the bus at all times. Any reported problems will be handled according to our discipline code (*See Member Code of Conduct for additional information*).

**Program Hours**

At school - based locations, the program operates for 3 hours from school dismissal. At our Centre Street and Spruce Street locations programs run from pick-up at the school until 6:30 p.m. Monday – Friday unless otherwise indicated.

***Many schools and school districts plan to open the 2020-2021 year with either 100% virtual learning or a hybrid learning model. During this time we will operate from 7:45 am – 5:30 pm.***

**Half Days**

The after school program will run on scheduled half days at the Centre Street and Spruce Street locations. It may or may not be open on half days at school based sites. Please speak with the after school program site director for details.

**School Holidays and Holiday Camp**

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County will provide a Holiday Camp program for parents registered in the after school program during a number of school holidays. Check with the program director for more details.

**Inclement Weather**

The Club will make decisions based on the weather if after school program will be cancelled. We follow the Trenton and Lawrence Township School District on closings, delays, etc.

In the event of inclement weather after the children arrive at the after school program, the program may have an early closing. Parents will be notified by the “Remind” application for any changes in the program schedule or if the program is closing early. For details of how to register on “Remind” please call the membership office at ext. 201, 202 for our Spruce St. operations or 117 for Centre St. operations.



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**Late Pick-up Policy**

All children must be picked up by 5:30 pm at our Centre Street and Spruce Street locations during the special, Covid-19 operating hours and by 6:30 during our regular operating hours. Youth must be picked up by 6:15 pm at school based locations. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to notify the program staff if pick up will be after the program ends.

**A late fee of \$1.00 per minute, per child will be charged after the program closes. (Even in the event that a phone call is received, a late fee may be assessed.) All late fee payments need to be paid the next business day by noon. If payment is not made the child will not be able to return to the program until all late fee payments are paid in full.**

If children are not picked up at the close of the program, program staff will call the listed emergency pick up person to come for the child(ren). The Department of Children and Families and/or the police will be contacted if we are unable to reach anyone to pick up the child(ren).

While occasional lateness is understandable, chronic lateness and/or failure to pay the late fee charge will result in dismissal from the program.

**Snacks & Lunch**

We provide children with a nutritious snack daily. Outside food or snack will not be permitted during the Covid-19 pandemic. You will be provided with the monthly snack menu.

We provide full day children with a nutritious hot lunch daily. You will be provided with the monthly lunch menu.

**All snacks are peanut/nut free. We are a peanut/nut-free facility.**

**Birthdays & Celebrations**

We are sure that you are aware that many children in today's world face health issues concerning food. Many of our members deal with serious food-related problems that can require emergency procedures.

The health, safety and well-being of the children are always our first concern. **Therefore, we adopted a no food policy for birthdays and we are a peanut/nut free facility.**

**Arrival & Dismissal/Sign-in & Sign-out Policy**

Members should not arrive at the Club earlier than 7:45 a.m. for full day program, 8:00 a.m. for holiday camp programs and 2:45 p.m. for the traditional after school program. Supervision is not provided prior to that time. Please arrive and dismiss through the designated exits.

**Children must be signed in (when required) and out every day by a parent or guardian 18 years of age or older. Please make sure to sign your child in (when required) and out.**

**During the Covid-19 pandemic members will go through a health screening each morning and have their temperature taken prior to being admitted into our buildings. Those who do not pass the health check will not be admitted into the building. In this situation, parents/guardians will be given direction on how they can proceed in order to return to program.**



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A child will not be released to anyone other than a parent /guardian or the person designated on the membership form. If your child is being picked up by someone other than yourself or your designee, you must provide a written, signed and dated note of authorization. The person picking up your child must provide picture identification and is required to sign your child out of the program.

**Release of Children**

Once a child arrives at the building, he or she will not be permitted to leave for any reason. Children will only be released to a parent/guardian or authorized person.

**Children are not permitted to walk home from the after school program.**

**Attendance & Absences**

When your child is absent from the program, please call the main office of each location to report the absence or send an email to the program director. The numbers are:

- Centre Street Location: (609) 392-3191
- Spruce Street Location: (609) 695-6060

When leaving a message, please indicate the following:

- Your Child's Name
- Date
- Staff Member
- Reason for Absence
- Expected Date of Return

***\*\*If your child is running a fever or ill, please keep him/her home. Members should be fever free and vomit free for 24 hours before returning to the program.***

**All members absent due to communicable disease must be readmitted to the Club through the Senior Program Director.**

**Discipline Code**

At the Club, one of our primary goals is to provide a safe, nurturing, and enriching environment for all of the children we serve. We recognize that one of our jobs is to help children learn appropriate ways to handle conflicts. We work on this as conflicts arise, helping the children find solutions. Our primary method of discipline is to keep kids active in well-structured programs and focus on and reward positive behavior.

Children enrolled in our after school program are expected to set and maintain standards of citizenship and courtesy.

Children are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that is safe and courteous while enjoying their rights and privileges. Mutual respect for the rights of other members and adults and also respect for the rights of others' personal property will help provide a safe, orderly and civil environment for everyone.

A child's behavior which infringes on the rights of other members or on personal or Club property will not be tolerated. Children engaging in such behavior should expect consequences for such behavior.

**We reserve the right to exclude any child from the program for a specified period of time or to terminate any child's enrollment if that child is found to be continuously disruptive to the program.**



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**Verbal or physical harassment of members by other members violates individual rights and will not be tolerated.**

Deliberate damage to another child's property or Club property will result in payment by parents/guardians for such damage. Taking property of another child or of the Club will be treated in a serious manner.

Each child is expected to respect and understand the differences they see in other children's abilities, appearance, dress, etc.

The parents/guardians are included in this discipline process so children can see that both parents and staff reinforcing the policies while setting a limit. Program staff shall provide each child with guidance that helps the child acquire positive self-concept and self-control. Behavior guidance used by each program staff member will be constructive, positive, and suited to the age of the child at all times.

The following rules and standards apply.

1. To prevent unacceptable behavior from occurring the staff will:
  - Model appropriate behavior.
  - Arrange the classroom environment to enhance the learning of acceptable behaviors.
  - Use descriptive phrase praise when appropriate occurs.
2. When unacceptable behavior occurs or is about to occur, program staff will use:
  - a. redirection—substitute a positive activity for a negative one
  - b. distraction—change the focus of the activity or behavior
  - c. active listening to determine the underlying cause of the behavior
  - d. Time-out/Thinking Chair (*separation from the group*) is used as a last resort, only when less intrusive methods has been tried and or behavior of the child is dangerous to himself and others.
    - i. In the event a time out is used, the child will be separated from the group for a period of time, often 1 minute times their age (For example a 10 year old would get 10 minutes while a 6 year old would get 6 minutes).
    - ii. If the child cannot calm themselves down and be ready to join the group again they will be removed from the classroom and taken to the Program Director.
    - iii. If the staff is still unable to calm down the child and resolve the matter, a parent or guardian will be called and given the opportunity to calm down your child.
    - iv. Failure to calm down your child within a 5-10 minute period will result in you needing to pick up your child immediately.

Members, including parents/guardians, are expected to:

1. Members are expected to demonstrate honesty and integrity and have a sense of purpose and fortitude.
2. Respect the rights and safety of others.
3. Show proper care for Club property and work to keep the Club neat & clean.
4. Respect and treat each other as they would like to be treated.
5. Respect others differences.
6. Members should dress appropriately.
7. Members should not bring weapons or other prohibited items into the Club.
8. Resolve conflict peacefully, ask for help from staff when needed and do not resort to violence.
9. Be polite, have fun, and smile.



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10. Strive for their best and encourage others to do the same.
11. Adhere to classroom and bus rules/regulations;
12. Conduct themselves appropriately on any field trips.
13. Respect the rights and safety of others;
14. Respect Club property and the property of others;
15. Respect the authority of all program staff members of the Boys & Girls Club;
16. Adhere to classroom and bus rules/regulations;
17. Conduct themselves appropriately on any field trips.

**Bus Rules:**

- Sit properly in the seat, with seat belts securely fastened.
- Respect the people on the bus and property.
- Eating is not permitted on the bus.
- Hands and feet remain inside the bus.

If a member does not conduct him/herself as deemed by the Boys & Girls Club staff (*i.e. bus drivers/bus aide*) the following course of response can be taken for any inappropriate behavior:

- Verbal/written warning and a meeting with parent/guardian.
- Parent meeting with the Program Director.
- Prohibited from attending field trips, special events or activities.
- Suspension from the after school program.
- Expulsion from the after school program.

**Please note that these expectations apply to all parents/guardians when in the building.** Abusive behavior and/or verbal threats by parents/guardians toward program staff will not be tolerated. This will result in immediate termination.

In addition, lack of cooperation by the parents with the program's efforts to resolve differences and/or to meet the child's needs through parent/staff meetings or conferences can result in termination from the program.

Our primary method of discipline is to keep kids active in well-structured programs, focus on and reward positive behavior, and to catch problems while they are still small.

All attendees of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County are expected to set and maintain standards of citizenship and courtesy.

If a child does not conduct him/herself as deemed by the Boys & Girls Club staff and support staff (*i.e. bus drivers*) the following course of response can be taken for any inappropriate behavior:

- Meeting with parents
- Suspension from bus riding
- Prohibited from attending field trips, special events or activities
- Suspension from the after school program
- Termination from the after school program



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**Homework**

One hour will be dedicated to homework. On occasions, teachers will give more than 1 hour of homework but homework may still need to be completed at home. We have a minimum of two staff working with each group throughout the day and assist with homework but we strongly recommend that parents or someone at home review the homework each night.

**Dress Code**

Children should dress appropriately for the weather and activity. Children should not wear any revealing tops or shorts/skirts that are above the mid-thigh. If a child is sent inappropriately dressed, the parent/guardian will be called and must bring the child clothing that is deemed appropriate.

Please be advised the following articles of clothing are prohibited:

- Bandanas; hats; hoods; torn clothing or excessively long t-shirts
- Open-toed shoes, sandals, or any loose fitting footwear. Members must have sneakers to participate in gym, sports-related, and outside activities.
- Any clothing featuring violence, profanity, or any offensive pictures or words.

**All youth must wear a cloth or disposable mask at all times.**

**Personal Belongings**

Children should not bring valuables (*money, clothing, games, cell phone, pagers, etc.*) or personal items such as toys, stuffed animals, etc. to the after school program except when there is a special event or request made by program staff.

All items left at the Club at the end of the day will be placed in our lost and found area. The Boys & Girls Clubs will not be held responsible for any lost or stolen items.

**Medicine**

Medications will be administered by a designated program staff when physicians find it necessary for a child to have medicine during the day. Permission must be granted by parent/guardian and specific instructions must be obtained from the physician prescribing the medicine.

**All prescription medicines must be in the original bottle. A signed consent form and prescription from the doctor must be on file. Your child will not be able to start the afterschool program if you have not completed this as well as supplying the program staff with the medicine.**

1. Must be accompanied by a note from parent/guardian giving permission for the staff to give the medication.
2. Must have a note/order from a physician, dentist, and orthodontist (on form or letterhead) containing the following:
  - a. Child's name
  - b. Date
  - c. Medication name
  - d. Dosage
  - e. Time to be given
  - f. Side effects to be observed
  - g. Length of time order is in effect.
  - h. Physician's signature





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3. Must be in its original container (*ask your pharmacist for a separate bottle for the Club*). Over-the-counter items **MUST** be in original packaging and listed on the physician order.

4. A child may only self-administer medication without supervision of the designated staff for asthma or other life-threatening illnesses with the written permission of the doctor, program staff, parent and director.

"Life-threatening illness" has been defined as an illness or condition that requires an immediate response to specific symptoms that if left untreated may lead to potential loss of life such as, but not limited to, the use of any inhaler to treat an asthma attack or the use of an adrenaline injection to treat a potential anaphylactic reaction.

5. All medications whether prescribed or over the counter including Tylenol, Advil, Midol, Benadryl, cough medicine, etc., shall be administered by only the designated staff or Senior Program Director.

These regulations are for the protection and well-being of all the children. If you have any questions concerning these procedures, please contact the Program Director.

Children are not permitted to carry prescription or non-prescription medication(s) in the Club unless permission has been granted to self-administer medication in accordance with The Self Administration of Medication Policy.

### **Illness**

If a child has any of the following symptoms, the parent/guardian or emergency contact will be notified to pick up the child immediately:

- Fever of 100.4 degrees or higher;
- Vomiting or diarrhea;
- Accident requiring medical attention or a change of clothes
- Contagious disease;
- Any other physical or emotional situation or trauma which requires parent intervention.

**Your child should be fever free and free from any other contagious diseases for 24 hours before returning to our program.**

When accidents occur during the after school program, first aid will be given to the child by the program staff.

For serious injuries requiring immediate medical attention, Emergency Medical Technicians/Police Department will be called and the child will be taken to the hospital. Parents/Guardians will be called immediately. **It is therefore extremely important that we have all current, working numbers for all parent/guardians and emergency contacts.**

A program staff member will accompany the child to the hospital and remain at the hospital until a parent/guardian arrives.

### **Communicable Diseases**

If a child contracts any communicable disease, please report it to us immediately. The child may not return to the program without a written doctor's note stating that the child presents no risk to himself/herself or others.



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If a child becomes ill during the program, first aid certified staff will use his/her professional judgment to determine if the student should remain at program or be sent home. **It is essential for the program to have the current working telephone number of each parent or guardian.**

**If it is deemed necessary for the child to be sent home, a parent or guardian must pick up the child within one hour of being contacted by the Boys & Girls Clubs staff.**

The Boys & Girls Clubs staff will not be responsible for providing any change of clothing for any child for any reason. A parent/guardian or emergency contact will be called to pick any child that requires a change of clothing.

**Telephone Use/Cell Phone Usage**

The Boys & Girls Clubs staff will only be permitted to use the phone in the case of an emergency and/or to contact a parent/guardian regarding a member.

The program staff will not be permitted to contact parents/guardians to bring such things as snacks, money, etc. Please bring or send your child with everything that s/he will need for the day.

To contact a program staff member, call our main offices at (609) 392-3191 for Centre Street location and (609) 695-6060 for Spruce Street location.

Club members in the after school program are not permitted to use cell phones while at the club.

In case of emergency, members should ask program staff for permission to use the phone.

Members who visit the club during drop - in hours must keep their phone on vibrate while in the building.

- If a member is using a cell phone, they will be asked them to put it away. If it occurs again the phone will be confiscated until the parent/guardian picks the child up.

**Policy Non-Compliance**

**Failure to comply with the Cell Phone Policy may result in confiscation of cell phone, disciplinary action, and possibly expulsion for members.**

**Use of Technology and Social Media Policy**

All members are required to abide by the Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County Acceptable Use Agreement. All computer hardware and software belong to the Club and the Club retains the right to access e-mail, files or other material maintained on a Club computer as it believes necessary. All members are expected to be on appropriate websites. Violations of the rules and code of the Acceptable Use Agreement will be dealt with seriously. Violators may lose computer privileges and may be subject to other disciplinary action.

Use of social media is not allowed in the after school program.

**Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying**

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying or passive support for those acts. A safe environment is necessary for members to be able to reach their full potential as productive, caring and responsible citizens.

Harassment, intimidation, or bullying is conduct that disrupts both a member's ability to learn and the club's ability to educate its members. "Harassment, intimidation, or bullying" means any gesture, written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication (phone, computer, etc.), that takes place on Club property, at any Club-sponsored function or



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on a school bus that is motivated by an actual or perceived characteristic, (race, color, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc.) and has the effect of harming a member or damaging the member's property, or placing a member in reasonable fear of harm or damage to his/her property; or is insulting or demeaning to any member to cause substantial disruption in, interference with, the orderly operation of the Club.

This policy will impose appropriate consequences and remedial actions in response to acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying and applies to all members, Club employees and volunteers.

**Parent Information**

For the most updated information, please download the "Remind" app. For more details please ask our membership office. Information and happenings can also be found in our Club brochures, parent flyers, newsletters and on our website and social media pages. These sources will contain information concerning weekly activities, upcoming events, special programs and other important notices. In addition, a weekly email is sent out to the parents/guardians every Friday. This email will contain information concerning weekly activities, upcoming events, special programs and other important notices. Sometimes additional emails are sent out during the week to inform or remind parents/guardians of things happening, upcoming events, or other important information for you to be aware of.

Parents/guardians have the right to schedule a meeting with the Program Director at any time. If there are any concerns that need to be discussed regarding your child, they should be brought to the immediate attention of the director.

**Parking**

Please be careful and slow down when entering our street as there are children present.

**Please do not double park or create a parking space at any time. Often times, our buses are unable to get up close to drop off members.**

**Field Trips**

During the course of the year, the after school program may take field trips to local attractions. These trips are a valuable part of our after school experience. The same rules of conduct required in the Club are enforced on these trips.

**Parent/guardian will be informed of all field trips via email, apps, parent board, etc.**

**A completed permission slip and/or waiver is required for some field trips.**

**Emergency Evacuation**

In case of an emergency or natural disaster where the building must be evacuated, children will be moved off-site to a secure location. Please speak with your child's After School Director to get the address of their evacuation location.

**Drills**

The Club performs monthly emergency drills.

Procedures are outlined for each program staff member. For safety reasons, children are expected to follow the staff's instructions, exit the room in a single line, refrain from conversation, use assigned exits and report to the assigned outdoor area.

**Custody/Court Orders**



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Safety and security is one of our top priorities for every member. As a result, we must make sure to have accurate information relating to parent/guardian custody.

We must be advised of all court orders and/or custody matters involving a child enrolled in the after school program. In the event that a legal document restricts or limits contact with a child enrolled in our program, this document must be furnished to the program.

If your child is living with one parent who has legal custody and the non-custodial parent is not permitted to contact the child at the Club, or remove the child from the Club, the Membership Office must be provided with custody papers and/or written evidence indicating the same. If these papers are not provided, we cannot refuse access to the child by the non-custodial parent.

Any change in the custodial status must be reported to the Membership Office. Should the stipulations or conditions of any legally binding document change, we must receive a copy of the revised legal document. Without this, we are obligated to comply with the existing documents in our possession.

**Withdrawal from the program**

If your child is withdrawing from the program, please notify the Membership Director at least two weeks in advance. Pro-rated monthly refunds will only be given during the first two weeks of the month. Failure to notify the Membership Director by the prescribed time frame, the parent will be responsible for the payment of the month you are withdrawing.

Memberships are **non-refundable**.

**Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P)**

In keeping with New Jersey's child care center licensing requirements, we are obligated to provide you, as the parent/guardian of a child enrolled at our center, with the Office of Licensing Information to Parents Letter. The letter highlights, among other things: your right to visit and observe our center at any time without having to secure prior permission; the center's obligation to be licensed and to comply with licensing standards; and the obligation of all citizens to report suspected child abuse/neglect/exploitation to the Child Protection and Permanency, CP&P (*formerly the Division of Youth and Family Services, DYFS*).

**However, the club will have limited in-person engagement due to the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore will require parents to make an appointment to enter our buildings for any meetings or conferences that are deemed an emergency. Otherwise meetings will be scheduled outside of program hours. Parents/Guardians that enter our buildings will be required to take part in the same health screenings that staff and campers are required to go through each day. If a parent/guardian does not pass the health screening or refuses to take part in the health screening, their meeting will be canceled or rescheduled for another date.**

Here is a copy of the Manual of Requirements on the DCF website:

[www.state.nj.us/dcf/providers/licensing/laws/index.html](http://www.state.nj.us/dcf/providers/licensing/laws/index.html)