



www.myyouthcenter.org

Providing structured and supervised time
for enrichment and recreation
during the after school hours
for sixth and seventh graders
in Needham, MA

Parent Handbook 2012-2013



THE CENTER

located at The Congregational Church of Needham

1154 Great Plain Ave

Needham, MA 02492

(781) 444-2510 ext. 198

info@myyouthcenter.org

www.myyouthcenter.org

Rev. Jamie Green, Director

WELCOME

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The staff at *The Center* would like to take this opportunity to welcome your family to our after school program, where youth are encouraged to pursue their own and new interests, develop lasting friendships, and grow in confidence, independence, and respect for themselves and others. This parent handbook outlines what you may expect from *The Center* and what the program expects from you in return. We hope it will be helpful and we welcome your suggestions and feedback. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call Rev. Jamie Green, *The Center* Program Director, at the (781) 444-2510 ext 198.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Staff

The Center strives to hire and train the best qualified staff. All of our staff have been CORI checked, are CPR/First Aid Certified and trained to work with your youth at this center. Our staff is committed to providing engaging opportunities to the youth participating in our program. Additional staff will be hired for the 2012-2013 school year.

- *Rev. Jamie Green- Director of The Center:* Rev. Jamie Green is the Youth Minister at The Congregational Church of Needham. She is a graduate of Northwestern University in Evanston, IL and Harvard Divinity School in Cambridge, MA, where studies included world religions, journalism, psychology, child development and youth ministry. Her passions include art, music, drama, social justice, and spirituality. Rev. Green has previously served four Congregational Churches in Massachusetts, Illinois and Wisconsin, and has over 10 years of experience working with youth. Rev. Green can be reached at director@myyouthcenter.org
- *Stephanie Granger- Youth Worker at The Center:* Stephanie Granger is a Youth Worker at The Center and a Master of Divinity student at Andover Newton Theological School. She is a graduate of Defiance College in northwest Ohio, where she majored in Religious Studies. Her interests are mission/service activities, reading, music, and working with children and youth. She is one of three leaders for the youth group at the United Church of Clinton. Along with working at The Center she works at the ANTS Trask library. Stephanie was previously the Christian Education Director at the Village Congregational Church in Whitinsville, MA. Stephanie can be reached at stephanie@myyouthcenter.org.
- *Front Desk Staff and Tutors:* Several Needham High Students will be working and volunteering their time at The Center by working at the Front Desk and offering tutoring.

Governance

The Center is governed by the Church Board of The Congregational Church of Needham, and The Center Committee, consisting of five members: Diana Conroy, Rev. Jamie Green, Kellie Marshall, Heather Salerno, and Barbara Suarez.

Philosophy

The Center is predicated on the belief that youth:

- grow toward self-reliance and healthy independence
- develop positive feelings of self-worth and inner-strength
- learn to interact with others, respecting their rights and feelings
- learn to solve problems and resolve conflicts by expressing their feelings in appropriate ways, and
- grow toward physical, emotional, social, and intellectual maturity....

in an environment which offers stimulating and structured activities, with emphasis on freedom with responsibility, and under the guidance of caring adult mentors who help youth learn to make decisions and accept consequences for their actions, as they explore and find joy in learning about the world around them.

Mission Statement

The Center strives to be a safe and supportive place for youth to connect, grow and develop to their fullest potential- physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually- by encouraging individuality, self discovery, cooperation, and respect for themselves, others and their surroundings, through supervised and developmentally appropriate activities in the after school hours.

Communication

The Center utilizes many different forms to communicate information to our families. The use of phone trees, emails, web postings, and flyers will be used throughout the school year to get information out to our families. Please keep your email address, phone number and other contact information up to date with *The Center*. *The Center* can be contacted at (781) 444-2510 ext. 198 or info@myyouthcenter.org

Parent Involvement

Parent concerns, opinions, and suggestions are welcomed at any time. Communication with the program director and staff assistants is strongly encouraged. *The Center* is continually building community partnerships. We are always looking for parent involvement in building community awareness in the importance of afterschool programs. Parents are also encouraged to participate and volunteer in the program at anytime, after being CORI checked. Please see Director to sign up.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Days and Hours of Operation

The Center will be open Monday-Friday, 2pm-6pm, on every school day presented on the Town of Needham School District Calendar. In addition, The Center will be open from 11:30am-6pm on scheduled early release days with the exception of November 21, from 7:30am-10am on delayed opening days, and from 7:30am-6pm on two mid-week holidays: September 26 and November 6. With the exception of the above dates, The Center will not be open when schools are closed or when there are emergencies constituting early dismissal. Please see the Calendar for student holidays and days off at <http://www.needham.k12.ma.us/calendars/documents/Pupils-Cal-12-13.pdf>

You may contact The Center at (781) 444-2510 ext. 198 or www.myyouthcenter.org for up-to-date information regarding hours of operation.

The Center's policy on inclement weather days (i.e. snow days) affecting operating hours will be:

1. If school does not open in the morning, we will not be open.
2. If school closes during the regular school day or there is an unscheduled early release of students, we will not be open.
3. If school is open and goes all day on a bad weather day, we mostly likely will be open. Please call The Center or visit our website for the most up-to-date information.

Enrollment

Enrollment in the program shall be granted without regard to race, gender, age, sexual orientation, ability and economic circumstance. Youth in the sixth and seventh grade are eligible to participate in *The Center* and are enrolled on a "first come, first served" basis, until enrollment has reached maximum capacity of 75 registered youth, after which youth will be placed on a Wait List and will be contacted when a spot opens up.

Registration

Before your youth can begin participation in *The Center* a registration packet must be completed, and a non-refundable deposit of \$25 per youth is required at the time of registration. Once registered, each youth will receive a membership card.

The registration packet includes:

1. Registration Form, including Information regarding Youth, Parent/Legal Guardian, Allergies/Medications and Health Insurance. (Please note, health insurance is required for enrollment in the program)
2. Parent Handbook Release
3. Behavioral Contract
4. Computer Use and Internet Safety Agreement
5. Release/Pick-Up Authorization
6. Anticipated Weekly Schedule
7. Administration of Medication Form
8. Transportation Waiver for Seventh Graders
9. Punch Pass Form

All forms are required to be completed before a membership card will be issued. In addition, parents of youth with special needs are required to make an appointment with the program director prior to registering the youth in the program, to ensure that all the youth's needs will be able to be met.

All information will be kept on file for each youth. It is the parent's responsibility to keep the Center informed of any change in their youth's emergency, medical or physical conditions.

Membership Card

Once registered, each youth will receive a membership card to sign in and out of *The Center*. The cards may be kept at *The Center*, or carried by the youth. If lost, there is a \$5 replacement fee for each card. It is preferred that youth use their card to sign in and out of *The Center*, but an option to manually sign in using a phone number will also be available.

Fees

Registration: The fee for Registration for the 2012-2013 school year is \$25.00. This fee must be paid at the time of registration, before a membership card is issued.

Membership Card Replacement: If lost or stolen, there is a \$5 replacement fee for each Membership Card.

Daily Usage: The fee for daily use of The Center is \$30/day or \$250 for 10 punches paid in advance using our Punch Pass System. Early Release Days are \$60/day or two punches, and Midweek Holidays are \$90/day or 3 punches.

Punch Pass: We offer a 10 Punch Pass for \$250 that may be purchased in advance at any time, and may be used for any open days during the 2012-2013 school year. One punch will be used each day your youth attends, with the exception of early release days when two punches will be used, and mid-week holidays when three punches will be used. Once you have purchased the Punch Pass, your youth can attend any day at The Center. We ask that you email or call in your youth's schedule of planned attendance at The Center for the upcoming week by Friday at 5pm, or call the Center by noon on the day your youth plans to attend. The Punch Pass is non-transferable and non-refundable, and expires at the end of the 2012/2013 school year. Parents will notified via email when their Punch Pass has two punches left, at which time additional Punch Passes may be purchased. Forms to purchase Punch Passes will be available at The Center's Registration Desk and on the website (myyouthcenter.org). Punch passes will be kept at The Center at all times.

Weekly Bills: If the Punch Pass system is not used or has run out, a \$30 charge will be added to the Youth's account for a normal school day, a \$60 charge will be added to the Youth's account for an early release day, or a \$90 charge will be added for a mid-week holiday. Bills for charges due will be sent weekly via email on Friday evenings and payment is due fourteen days after the date of the bill. Late payments will be assessed a \$15 charge for every week the payment is late.

Late Fees: There is a \$1 per minute late fee for any youth at *The Center* past closing time of 6pm.

Form of Payment: The only form of acceptable payment is a check or money order, made out to The Congregational Church of Needham, with the memo line "The Center".

Refunds: *The Center* reserves the right to close due to insufficient enrollment or other reasons. If this happens, all families will be notified and all payments for Punch Passes already received and not yet used will be refunded. If *The Center* closes before the beginning of the school year, registration fees will also be refunded. If a youth is dismissed from the program for disciplinary reasons, no refunds for fees or punch passes will be issued. *The Center* staff will make the final determination of whether a refund will be made for any other reason.

Drop-In Format/Open-Door Policy

Participation in any and all Center activities is on a voluntary, drop-in basis. Youth may arrive at or depart from the program at any time during the open hours of the program. We do ask that parents email (info@myyouthcenter.org) or call ((781) 444-2510 ext. 198) in their youth's actual schedule of planned attendance at The Center for each week by the previous Friday at 5pm, or call the Center by noon on the day your youth plans to attend, in order to best prepare for staffing, snacks, supplies and materials. In addition, parents may also complete the Release/Pick-Up Authorization Form to inform staff of preferred ways youth can leave *The Center*. However, this Open Door Policy allows youth to arrive to and leave from *The Center* at any time in any way, regardless of what is printed on the Release/Pick-Up Authorization Form and the Schedule of Attendance. Parents will be notified immediately if youth arrive or leave in a way not specified on the forms. Please note there is a \$1 per minute late fee for any youth at *The Center* past closing time of 6pm. If youth is walking home, youth must leave premises of *The Center* and The Congregational Church of Needham by 6pm. *The Center* assumes no responsibility for transportation to or from *The Center*, and *The Center* is not responsible for youth before they arrive at or after they leave *The Center*. Please take time to communicate your expectations to your youth as to when they may leave, where they may go, and who they may leave with.

Scheduling

During registration, parents must fill out an anticipated weekly schedule to give staff an idea of how many youth to expect each day. During the school year, parents are asked to email (info@myyouthcenter.org) or call ((781) 444-2510 ext. 198) in their youth's actual schedule of planned attendance at The Center for each week by the previous Friday at 5pm, or email or call the Center by noon on the day your youth plans to attend, in order to best prepare for staffing, snacks, supplies and materials. You may also use an Actual Weekly Schedule Form found on our website, www.myyouthcenter.org or at *The Center's* front desk. If your youth is scheduled to attend based on the Actual Weekly Schedule Form, an email or phone call, and does not show up, parents will be notified immediately.

Early Release Days

On scheduled early release days, *The Center* will be open from 11:30am-6pm, with the exception of November 21. A pizza lunch will be provided, and special programming will be offered in conjunction with several community groups. Youth are welcome to arrive at any time during the open hours of the program. We do ask that parents email (info@myyouthcenter.org) or call ((781) 444-2510 ext. 198) in their youth's schedule of planned attendance at The Center for each week, including early release days, by the previous Friday at 5pm, or call *The Center* by 11am on the Early Release Day your youth plans to attend, in order to best prepare for staffing, snacks, supplies and materials. The fee for Early Release Days will be \$60 or 2 punches regardless of the number of actual hours spent at the program.

Delayed Opening Days

On scheduled delayed opening days, *The Center* will be open for Breakfast Club from 7:30am-10:00am. Breakfast will be provided and *The Center* staff will walk youth to school 10 minutes before school begins. We do ask that parents email (info@myyouthcenter.org) or call ((781) 444-2510 ext. 198) in their youth's schedule of planned attendance at *The Center* for each week, including delayed opening days, by the previous Friday at 5pm, or call *The Center* by 7am on the Delayed Opening Day your youth plans to attend, in order to best prepare for staffing, snacks, supplies and materials. The fee for Delayed Opening Days will be \$30 or 1 punch.

Mid-Week Holidays

On scheduled mid-week holidays: September 26 and November 6, The Center will be open from 7:30am-6:00pm. Breakfast, lunch and snacks will be provided. Youth are welcome to arrive at any time during the open hours of the program. We do ask that parents email (info@myyouthcenter.org) or call ((781) 444-2510 ext. 198) in their youth's schedule of planned attendance at The Center for each week, including delayed opening days, by the previous Friday at 5pm, or call The Center by 7am on the Mid-Week Holiday your youth plans to attend, in order to best prepare for staffing, snacks, supplies and materials. The fee for Mid-Week Holidays will be \$90 or 3 punches, regardless of the number of actual hours spent at the program.

Sign In/Out Procedure

Each youth must sign in and out of the program with their membership card, or manually sign in using a phone number without the card, in order to record the date and time the youth arrives or leaves. The youth must have a completed registration packet on file in order to have a membership card in order to sign in and out of the program. If an unregistered youth shows up at the Center, our staff will double check registration records in the event of an error. If no error was made and the youth is not registered, staff must call a parent immediately to pick up the youth or give The Center further instruction on what to advise the youth to do.

Arrival To Program

Youth may arrive at any time during open hours of *The Center*. Youth are encouraged to walk with friends to *The Center*, or be driven by a parent/guardian/trusted adult (see special transportation policy below for 7th graders). Once youth have arrived, their membership card must be swiped or they must manually sign in using a home telephone number. Only pre-registered youth will be allowed to enter *The Center*. We ask that parents email or call in their youth's schedule of planned attendance at *The Center* for the upcoming week by the previous Friday at 5pm, or call *The Center* by noon on the day your youth plans to attend, in order to best prepare for staffing, snacks, supplies and materials. *The Center* assumes no responsibility for transportation to *The Center*, and *The Center* is not responsible for youth before they arrive at *The Center*.

Transportation Policy for Seventh Graders

On all days, youth are responsible for getting to The Center from Pollard Middle School on their own, by means such as walking or riding a bike. A bike rack is available at The Center. In the case of an extreme weather day when a student feels they cannot safely get to The Center (due to extreme rain, ice or cold), the student must call The Center and request a ride no later than 2:30pm at 781-444-2510 ext 198 or the director, Jamie Green, at 978-761-5959 (numbers located on the back of registration card). The Director or other adult staff member will make the decision whether or not the weather is extreme enough to warrant a ride, and if so, will designate a time and place for pick up in the adult staff member's personal automobile. Rides will cost \$5 and will be billed to the student's account, and can be paid any time by cash or check (no late fees will apply).

Departure From Program

Youth may leave at any time during open hours of *The Center*, but must leave by the time *The Center* closes. Youth must swipe their membership card as they leave, or manually sign out using a home telephone number. However, youth will not be permitted to leave *The Center* in any other method or with anyone other than the person(s) that the parents have listed on the Release/Pick-Up Authorization Form. Please note there is a \$1 per minute late fee for any youth at *The Center* past closing time of 6pm. If youth is permitted to walk home, youth must leave premises of *The Center* and The Congregational Church of Needham by 6pm. *The Center* assumes no responsibility for transportation from *The Center*, and *The Center* is not responsible for youth after they leave *The Center*.

Snack

The Center will provide a daily nutritious snack. *The Center* will provide appropriate snack options for those with special dietary needs indicated on the registration form. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to keep *The Center* updated regarding their youth's food allergies and dietary restrictions. *The Center* is a nut-free program. All families are asked not to bring food or materials into *The Center* that contain nut products. Program snacks may contain the following natural ingredients: cheese and cheese products, fresh vegetables/fruit, milk or milk products, whole grains and grain products.

Activities

There are four main areas at The Center- a quiet room (for homework and reading), a computer lab, a game room, and a gathering room. Activities include computers, creative play, arts and crafts, games, organized group play, snack time, community involvement and service, homework time, socialization and down time. Outdoor activities may be organized,

weather permitting. Please provide *The Center* staff with a signed note if your youth is unable to participate in any specific activities.

POLICIES

Behavioral Agreement

A Behavioral Agreement must be read and signed by the youth and his/her parent or guardian. The purpose of this policy is to ensure all youth and parents understand the guidelines and expectations of behavior at The Center.

Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting Requirements

All staff members are legally required to report any instance of observed or suspected child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities.

Computer Use and Internet Safety

A Computer Use and Internet Safety Agreement must be read and signed by the youth and his/her parent or guardian. The purpose of this policy is to ensure all youth and parents understand the guidelines that must be followed to gain computer privileges, including internet access.

Emergency and Disaster Preparedness

All Emergency and Evacuation Procedures are posted in The Center. The Center follows emergency procedures as set forth by the Town of Needham and the state of Massachusetts.

Emergency Plans

Each emergency situation will be evaluated and acted upon by what is in the best interest of the youth involved in the situation. Staff will always try to reach a youth's parent if transportation is necessary due to an emergency. If that is not possible, then those persons listed under Emergency Contacts will be contacted for emergency pick-up from the site. In cases of medical emergencies, 911 will be called and the youth will be transported to the nearest hospital for medical treatment. A staff member will accompany the youth in the ambulance and will bring the youth's records with all medical information and contact information. In such a case, documentation will be completed on an Illness/Injury Report Form.

Contingency plans for fire, natural disaster, loss of power, heat or water

If the church building closes due to loss of power, heat or, water, The Center will also close, and parents/guardians will be notified, as well as High Rock School. If loss of power, heat, or water should occur while The Center is in operation, parents and/or guardians and/or the youth's emergency contacts will be immediately notified and advised to pick-up their youth. In the event of a natural disaster, The Center will contact emergency personnel via 911 and follow the directions given. In case of emergency evacuation of the church building, the designated site for The Center is the Needham Post Office located on the corner of Linden Street and Great Plain Ave. In the case of a town-wide evacuation, youth will be moved to the primary shelter at the Pollard Middle School or the secondary shelter at the Needham High School according to the town's Emergency Management's recommendation.

Missing Youth

Once a youth is noted as missing, the Director or designee will make an initial search of the building and grounds. Attempts will be made to contact parents to confirm if the youth was picked-up. If not, the Director or designee will call the police (911) so a perimeter can be established for search. The Director will make all other required notifications.

Lockdown Procedure

The Center will follow a lockdown procedure in the event of an emergency where it is necessary to prevent the easy movement of persons in a school building. The Center will be notified by emergency personnel and will follow procedures and instructions by the Town of Needham. The Director will be the liaison with the police or Town of

Needham officials and follow all guidelines. All doors to *The Center* will be locked and all electronics need to be turned off. The Director will take attendance and establish a calm atmosphere. The youth will be directed in quiet activities and kept away from doors and windows. The Center will remain in lockdown until notified by officials, at which point the school will notify all parents that they can pick up their youth.

Emergency telephone numbers:

- Emergency medical personnel 911
- Needham Fire Department (781) 444-0142
- Needham Police (781) 455-7570
- Poison Control 1-800-222-1222

Grievance Process

The *Center* is an equal opportunity employer, and holds that all employees, parents, and youth shall be free from all forms of discrimination and conduct which can be considered harassing, coercive, disruptive, or in violation of any civil rights.

Employees, parents, and youth wishing to appeal decisions and/or actions made by *The Center* shall first discuss the complaint with the Director. The Director shall conduct an investigation into the complaint as deemed necessary. The Director shall render a decision within 10 business days.

If you are unsatisfied with the decision made by the Director, you may appeal in writing to the *Youth Center Committee of the Congregational Church of Needham*. The *Committee* will review the complaint along with the decision of the Director and any material gathered as a result of the investigation. The *Youth Center Committee* shall render a decision within 20 days of receipt of the written appeal.

Should the decision of the *Youth Center Committee* be unsatisfactory, you may appeal in writing the *Church Board*. The *Board* shall review all information submitted from the Program Director and the *Youth Center Committee*. The *Board* may hold a hearing with you if necessary to determine the final decision. The decision of the *Board* is final.

Healthy Practices

Staff and youth will wash their hands with liquid soap and warm running water at the following times:

- After using the toilet
- Before and after eating
- Upon returning from outdoor activities
- After wiping noses
- Before and after food preparation

Hand washing procedures will be posted throughout the program area. All areas utilized for food preparation or eating will be sanitized prior to use.

Illness/disease

If a youth has a communicable disease, the youth must be removed from the program until free of illness for 24 hours, the proper treatment has been completed and/or the doctor releases the youth.

Youth with any of, but not limited to, the following symptoms should not attend *The Center*.

- Fever
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Undiagnosed Rash
- Inflamed or Matted Eyes
- Severe cold, cough, and/or sore throat

We do not care for ill youth. If your youth shows signs of illness after arriving at the facility, we will separate him/her from the other youth. If your youth becomes ill during program time, the Director will contact you and require you or an authorized person to pick the youth up from the program.. If a parent cannot be reached, the youth's emergency contact numbers will be called. An illness/injury report form will be completed and filed, and a copy of the report, including details of what occurred and steps taken will be mailed to the parent/legal guardian's address.

Injury/Accident

Staff members are all CPR and First Aid certified. If a minor accident or injury (a scrape, cut, bump, etc.) occurs with a youth during program times the staff person attending to the youth will administer first aid and complete an Illness/Injury Report form. A copy of the report, including how the incident occurred and steps taken will be mailed to the parent/legal guardian's address.

In case of serious illness or injury, the staff will follow parental instructions written on the youth's registration form. However, in all cases, staff will call for emergency assistance in situations that are deemed to be serious enough in nature as to cause harm to your youth's life. If your youth has a major injury, the staff will take whatever steps may be necessary to obtain emergency medical care. These steps may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Attempts to contact a parent or guardian.
2. Attempts to contact you through any persons listed on the emergency information form you completed for us.
3. Administer emergency first aid.
4. Call an ambulance or fire rescue. The fee of this service is the responsibility of the parent.
5. Have the youth taken to an emergency hospital accompanied by a staff member, if possible.

The Center does not cover accident insurance. Your youth must be covered under your personal health insurance in order to be enrolled in The Center.

Licensing

This Center is not licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care or any other state agency, but is exempt from licensing due to its open door policy.

Medication

We prefer not to give any medication to youth, but if a youth is to receive any medication during the hours of the program, the following policies must be adhered to.

Our program will administer medication to a youth only after receiving a completed Administration of Medication form from the youth's doctor. For each youth receiving medication at the program, the form will include:

- Name of the medication
- Illness/condition being treated
- Dosage
- Route of administration
- Times/dates to be administered
- Doctor's signature
- Parent/guardian signature

Nut Free Policy

The Center adheres to a total nut-free policy. Parents and youth need to be mindful of any products containing nuts when preparing lunches or snacks, or bringing any food into *The Center*. Parents of youth who, historically, have suffered any anaphylactic reaction to any foods or insect bites, need to provide The Center with this information on the Registration Form, and if medicine needed, an Authorization of Medication Form, signed by a doctor.