

Parent Handbook

2026-2027



Elementary Grades K-5

Westford Recreation Department
65 Main Street 3rd
Westford, MA 01886

Phone: (978) 692-5532

Fax: (978) 392-4471

www.westfordrec.com

Registration Forms are fillable pdfs and can be emailed to:
WPC_recreation@westfordma.gov

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Dear Westford Family and Friends,

Welcome to the Westford Partnership for Children (WPC) After School Enrichment Program in partnership with WPS!

As we enter our 23rd year of our elementary after-school enrichment programs, I am excited to continue to offer our community more amazing programming. Implementing special activity selections and hiring professional educators within the field allows us to support the enrichment part of our program, which we continue to hold to a very high standard. In addition, allotting a portion of the afternoon for homework and recreational activities allows our participants to make their own choices, build trusting relationships with peers, and make good decisions during their time after school.

Westford Recreation takes great pride in our quality programming and feels exceptionally humbled to be able to offer flexibility while maintaining structure in a safe and nurturing environment for such a diverse population of our community's students. WPC's success would not be possible without the unwavering support of our collaborators, Westford Public Schools. We are extremely grateful for the relationships we have built within our school system and continue to foster those relationships with Recreation staff and WPS faculty communication. We also want to take a moment to thank the Westford community for their continued support.

This handbook is full of helpful details and information. Please keep it in an accessible place for reference throughout the year. Occasionally, we will send out addendums as needed. Creating a program experience for your child that is nurturing, fun, and enriching is a priority for all of us. We welcome your feedback and look forward to working with you and your family.

Again, thank you for contributing to our success!

Sincerely

Michelle Collett
Director of Recreation
Westford Partnership for Children Director
mcollett@westfordma.gov

The WPC After School Enrichment Program is licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Childhood Education and Care. For additional information regarding the program's regulatory compliance history please use the address and phone number listed below.

Department of Early Education and Care
324R Clark Street
Worcester, MA 01606
508-461-1453

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND MISSION

Westford Partnership for Children (WPC) After School Enrichment Program was created in 2004, in collaboration with Westford Public Schools, to provide a safe, supervised, constructive, stimulating, and fun environment for Westford elementary during the high-risk after-school hours. The program is designed to encourage learning and development outside of the school day, through a variety of structured activities. Our dedicated staff maintains a positive approach toward learning and developing meaningful relationships with each child while promoting three critical concepts: positive youth development, academic enrichment and support, and safety.

The WPC After School Enrichment Program for elementary school students offers homework assistance, science exploration, math enrichment, reading, music, crafts, sports, and games, as well as other activities to support and promote healthy social and emotional development. Our activities reinforce and enrich concepts and skills your child learns in school through simple tasks, as well as more complex, challenging interdisciplinary projects, and gross motor development. Our program allows your child to learn about topics and interests they may not necessarily have time to explore during school hours.

PROGRAM GOALS

- To meet the needs of our families by providing quality and affordable after-school programs.
- To reduce conflict between parental responsibilities and work requirements/schedules by providing a reliable, high-quality, school-age program.
- To provide and maintain a well-trained, professional, competent staff.
- To provide activities and materials that help develop an understanding and respect for our culturally diversified community.
- To promote self-esteem and emphasize positive values in the relationship children and adolescents have with each other and adults.
- To encourage creativity by providing a variety of experiences, materials, and learning activities.
- To provide a safe, accepting, nurturing, and inviting environment.
- To provide developmentally appropriate activities and offer a variety of recreational, instructional, educational, and physical programs.
- To provide opportunities that will encourage growth, socialization, and learning.
- To effectively communicate with parents/guardians concerning their child(ren)'s needs.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Days/Hours of Operation and Holidays

WPC After School Enrichment Program runs Monday through Friday. The program begins the first day of school and ends the last full day of school (there is no program on the last day of school, as it is an Early Release).

Daily operating hours of our K-5 programs are from school dismissal to 5:45 p.m., with a closing window from 5:45-6:00 p.m. All WPC participants should be picked up no later than 5:45 p.m. (the end of Block 3), as WPC staff needs the additional time (5:45-6:00 p.m.) to clean up, resolve any outstanding paperwork to be turned into the office the following day, shut down our WPC space, and vacate the building before the end of our agreed upon contract time with WPS.

Location and Phone Numbers

WPC Elementary Grades K-5:

Our program runs at each K-5 elementary school. Your child will attend the after-school program at the school they attend daily.

School (Program Site)	Program Central Location	WPC Phone Number at Site
Abbot School	Cafeteria	Site Cell: (978) 799-9259 Landline: (978) 399-2977
Crisafulli School	Cafeteria	Landline: (978) 692-0248 Site Cell: (978) 265-2063
Day School	Cafeteria	Site Cell: (978) 799-8989
Miller School	Cafeteria	Landline: (978) 392-4476ext.3824 Site Cell: (978) 846-4601
Nabnasset School	Cafeteria	Landline: (978) 692-0799 Site Cell: (978) 799-9586
Robinson School	Cafeteria	Site Cell: (978) 799-1254

Early Release Days

Occasionally the Westford Public Schools (WPS) will have an early release day.

- **NEW POLICY AS OF AUGUST 28, 2024****

If you plan to attend/use the early release day, you will now incur a flat rate of \$48.00 for the additional 3 hours (\$16.00/block) of care along with your regularly scheduled block(s) for that day. There is a space on the registration form where you will check off, to indicate that you will be needing the ½ day care and we will charge your City Hall Systems account accordingly.

- If your child is enrolled in the WPC program but **not registered for the day an early release falls on**, and you would like them to attend, you will need to call the Recreation Department by noon, one business day prior. You will also incur a flat rate of \$51.00 for the additional 3 hours of care and then an additional \$17.00/block depending on pick up time. Pick up times are the usual 3:55, 4:55 and 5:45 for 3-5 and 4:05, 5:05 or 5:45 for K-2 schools.

Limited staffing may affect the ability to add these extra days.

- If the Early Release falls on the day your child is registered and they **WILL NOT** be attending, please call the Recreation Department by noon (978) 692-5532 and report your child absent from the program. Failure to notify us of an absence will result in a \$10 Finder's Fee per child. It is critical you report your child absent, so we are not looking for them amongst the general business of school dismissal.

Email Blasts

Due to our increasing customer base, program delays, updates, and cancellations will be communicated **through email only**. Please ensure you provide us with a contact email that is regularly monitored by the parent/guardian and be on the lookout for emails from your program's Site Director. City Hall Systems, our online bill payment site, will also use this email for invoices and statements. Systems.

REGISTRATION

Registering Your Child and Enrollment Policy

The WPC program provides significant flexibility to help families meet their after-school care needs. The program is broken down into five sessions throughout the school year, with each session approximately eight (8) weeks long. A new registration is conducted in advance of each session. To enroll in the program, at a minimum, a participant must register for at least one block, one day a week, for each week within the session. You may register for any combination of additional days/blocks in a session up to full-time. Registration forms act as a schedule for the entire session. Session activities with limited availability will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis.

Examples:

- Minimum - one block, one day a week, for each week of the session. You register your child for the first block each Wednesday of the session.
- Maximum - You register your child for five days a week, three blocks a day, for each week in the session (with the exception of identified holidays).

Added Blocks - With proper advance notice, for participants who meet the minimum registration requirements, we provide additional flexibility to add blocks as may be needed. There is a slightly increased per-block fee for all added blocks.

Registration Forms

- A new registration form with activity selections is required for each session.
- REGISTRATION FORMS ARE DUE BY 4 P.M., ONE WEEK PRIOR TO YOUR START DATE.
 - For example, if your child is starting on a Wednesday, forms are due by 4 p.m. the Wednesday prior.
- All late forms and/or payments will incur a **\$25 late fee. NO EXCEPTIONS.**
- All forms and check/cash payments must be submitted to the Recreation Department. No forms or payments will be accepted by WPC staff at program sites.

Due to Early Education and Childcare (EEC) guidelines, children cannot attend the program without being registered in advance.

Documents Needed

As per the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) regulations, the following forms are required and must be completed and submitted to the Recreation Office before your child starts the program. Your child will not be allowed to attend the program without appropriate forms in his/her file.

- Registration Form
- Child information sheet
- WPC Participation Form (this will let your child's teacher know how your child will get home if the program were to close due to weather)
- Transportation plan
- Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) if your child has a chronic illness or condition.
- Medication consent form (if needed)

Withdrawing From/Switching Days

Please choose your days and blocks carefully as we do not allow withdrawals/switching days once a session has started. This is due to the staffing requirements set forth by the Department of Early Education and Care.

The WPC Program is designed with parents/caregivers in mind, if you need to make changes to your child's schedule, you can do so when registering for the following session.

Although we stand firm on our withdrawal policies, we also understand there may be instances that warrant a withdrawal. In that case, please contact the Recreation Office. A 25% administration fee may apply.

If your child can no longer attend the program due to a medical situation, you will be issued a refund or a credit. Please provide the office with proper medical documentation.

Adding Blocks/Days

Provided you have registered your child for the minimum enrollment of one block per week for the entire session, you may add blocks/days as the need arises. The fee for adding blocks is \$16/block. You must contact the Recreation Department no later than noon on the day you would like to add. These added block fees must be paid immediately. The Recreation Department reserves the right to deny added blocks if there is an outstanding balance due on the account or we have staffing restrictions.

DISCOUNTS, TUITION, AND OTHER FEES

Full-Time Discounts, Sibling Discounts, and Town Employee Discounts

Full-time participants, defined as those attending three blocks, five days a week from the start of the session, are eligible for a 12% discount on the session total. (The Full-time discount will apply to Kindergarteners who begin the program on September 7.)

Please Note: Full-time participants, as well as the siblings of full-time participants, are NOT eligible for a sibling discount.

Part-time participants are granted a 10% sibling discount for the second and each successive sibling registered for equal or lesser value. Sibling discount does not apply to added blocks/days or additional activity fees.

Town of Westford Employee Discount

All employees of the Town of Westford and Westford School Department are eligible for the 50% employee discount on session registration for the WPC After School Program. Proof of employment is necessary. Discounts only apply to parents or legal guardians with full custody and care of the child. Please call the Recreation office to learn more.

Tuition Payments

All payments will be made by the parent/guardian through www.epay.cityhallsystems.com, or by check or cash. Invoices will be sent out by email during the first week of the session. For more information, please visit our website www.westfordrec.com.

Invoices may be paid in full or split. We do ask that at least 50% of the session total be paid upon receipt of the invoice, and the full amount be paid by the 1st day of the second month. We are flexible with the timing of these payments if they are paid once services for that month are rendered. We always appreciate proper communication with the director if payment arrangements are necessary. Failure to pay in a timely manner without communication may impact your child's ability to attend the program. Added blocks will also be applied to your child's account on a weekly basis. (Separate invoices will not be sent out for these.) Please periodically check your account and make any payments due. We will not carry balances over from session to session. If your tuition is delinquent more than a month after services have been rendered, we may ask you to make other arrangements for your child until your balance is current.

In accordance with other town departments, debit and credit card transactions will be subject to a 2.95% convenience fee based on the payment amount, and electronic checks are FREE.

Additional Block Fees

The fee for added blocks is **\$17 per block**. The sibling discount does not apply for blocks added after registration. Payment for additional blocks must be paid through www.epay.cityhallsystems.com. Once you request an added block it will be posted to City Hall Systems, and we ask you to pay that by the **end of the week**. If there are unpaid added blocks, you won't be able to add a block until the previous added blocks are paid.

Absences, Late Arrivals, and Finder's Fees

There are no refunds, credits, or substitution of days for your child's planned or unplanned absence. Even if your child does not attend all registered days, you are still responsible for those daily fees.

Children who are absent from school will not be allowed to attend or participate in WPC programs on the day of their absence/suspension. Furthermore, children who leave school due to sickness and/or injury will not be allowed to participate in WPC programs that day.

If your child is absent from or late to the program on a scheduled day, you must notify the Recreation Department by noon that day, as that is when daily messages and information are relayed from our office to WPC staff. If we are not notified, you will be charged a \$10 Finder's Fee. After three occurrences, the fee will increase to \$15. Finder's Fees will be uploaded to your account on City Hall Systems. We understand that an email may sometimes be easier to use, so we ask that you send an email to the wpc_recreation@westfordma.gov, the site director of your child's program and/or Michelle Collett or Tiffany Gintner.

Westford Schools do not forward notes/messages reporting absences; so, it is critical that you alert the Recreation Department when your child will be absent or will arrive late to the program. Each site receives a daily list of children who are attending the program and must determine the whereabouts of each child. Staff may be unaware that your child has activities prior to our program (e.g., Chess Club, Yearbook, etc.), therefore, they do not know where or how to locate your child. It is very worrisome, time-consuming, and confusing if a child who is scheduled to be at the program does not show up or arrive on time.

Receipts, Flexible Spending, and Reimbursements Forms

All receipts will be processed at the end of each session, only upon request. All receipts will be sent electronically via email. It is important to keep these receipts for your records, as duplicate receipt requests make take longer.

If you require a Company Reimbursement Form signature, please bring the document directly to the Recreation Department.

DAILY PROCEDURES

Sign-In Procedure

Following the close of each school day, it is your child's responsibility to follow the school's dismissal procedure. Children not escorted to the program must present themselves immediately at the assigned "central location" for WPC program attendance. If your child has an in-school activity prior to attending the WPC program, please alert the Recreation Department. Otherwise, staff will not know where or how to locate your child and Finder's Fees will apply.

Beginning at the start of the program, a staff member will greet and sign in to each child. Sign-in serves as a transfer of responsibility of your child from the school to us.

Sign-Out Procedure

Following the end of your child's day, you must come into the building to sign them out (*does not apply to middle school students). Your signature serves as a transfer of responsibility of your child from us to you. The first time you pick up your child, we will ask you or anyone authorized but unknown to us who is picking up your child, for photo identification.

Children may only be picked up from the program by adults authorized on the *Child Information Form*. If you want to authorize a different person to pick up your child, please provide their WPC Site Director or the Recreation Department with a signed and dated note. In the event of a last-minute change, you can fax (978-392-4471) or email (WPC_recreation@westfordma.gov) names and contact information with a parent/guardian signature. All faxes/emails must be received no later than 3:45 p.m. NO VERBAL AUTHORIZATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

Due to increased security measures at each of our schools, parents/guardians or designees will need to follow the procedures listed below at pickup:

- **Abbot:** Come to the back door by the playground and ring the doorbell. A staff member will answer the door.
- **Crisafulli:** Knock on the cafeteria door to the left of the main entrance. A staff member will answer the door.
- **Day:** Knock on the cafeteria windows to the left of the main entrance. If staff is in the cafeteria, someone will answer the door. Should no one answer, please call the site cell phone.
- **Miller:** Knock on the cafeteria door behind the front kindergarten playground. A staff member will answer the door. If instructed to pick up in the gym, there is a small doorbell you can ring at that back door.
- **Nabnasset:** Proceed around the back of the school and knock on the cafeteria door. A staff member will answer the door.
- **Robinson:** Pull into the bus pickup area around the left of the building if looking at the main entrance and call the site cell phone. A staff member will bring your child to you with the clip board.

Late Pickup Policy

We expect you to arrive promptly at the end of your child's scheduled day. If you do not pick your child up at the end of their last scheduled block, the Site Director will place your child in the next block and you will be billed the **added block fee of \$14 per block**, per child.

Daily operating hours of our K-5 programs are from school dismissal to 5:45 p.m., with a closing window from 5:45-6:00 p.m. All WPC participants should be picked up no later than 5:45 p.m. (the end of Block 3), as WPC staff needs the additional time (5:45-6:00 p.m.) to clean up, resolve any outstanding paperwork to be turned into the office the following day, shut down our WPC space, and vacate the building before the end of our agreed upon contract time with WPS.

If you do not pick up your child by 6:00 p.m. we will follow these steps:

1. If your child has not been picked up by closing time (6:00 p.m.), a telephone call will be made to the parent(s)/guardian(s). If no one can be reached in a ten-minute period, we will proceed to the next step.
2. A phone call will be made to those listed as authorized to pick up your child(ren) on your *Child Information Form*. The first person contacted will be asked to pick up your child. If there is no response, steps 1 and 2 will be repeated at 6:20 p.m. and again at 6:30 p.m.
3. If contact has not been made with a parent/guardian or designees by 6:30 p.m., the staff member in charge will call the Westford Police Department and a report of action will be placed in the child's file.

You will be asked to sign the *Late Pickup Acknowledgement Form* every time that you are late past 6:00 p.m. in picking up your child. There will be a charge of \$2.00 per child for every minute after 6:00 p.m. that you are late in picking up. After three occurrences, the fee will increase to \$5.00 per minute and you will be asked to schedule a meeting with the WPC Director to discuss continued enrollment. NO EXCEPTIONS. This fee, if applicable, will be charged to your card on file.

It is your duty to ensure your child is picked up at their scheduled time. We are compassionate about parents'/guardians' needs and understand that most of our parents/guardians are "working parents" and may be held up in one way or another (e.g., traffic, train schedule, etc.) from time to time. However, WPC staff have other obligations and commitments outside of WPC and we feel that you should be respectful of their time, just as they are of yours. If you cannot be on time to pick up your child, other arrangements should be made. CHILDREN WILL NEVER BE LEFT UNATTENDED.

OUR PROGRAM AND YOUR CHILD

Outdoor and Other Play

We believe that play is a critical component in the healthy development of your child. Therefore, we encourage and support playtime in our program. We enforce the same rules and procedures for equipment use that are enforced by the schools. Children who attend our programs will be brought outside (at the discretion of the Site Director) daily, weather permitting. Please be sure that your child has adequate and weather-appropriate outdoor clothing and footwear to maintain good health during outdoor play in all suitable weather conditions, including normal winter temperatures. Please do not ask us to keep a child inside because of an allergy, cold, or other illness. A child who is too sick to go outside is usually too sick to be in a social situation with other children. In order to keep staffing levels at a safe number, we are unable to offer indoor supervision for children who prefer to remain inside. We follow school guidelines in determining when it is appropriate to go outside.

Homework Agreement

WPC believes that we can support your family and your child's school success by providing a homework block. This block of time is to be used for homework, studying, projects, problem-solving, and reading. Each site has different expectations for homework but there is always time allowed to get homework done.

Important points to remember regarding homework:

- WPC staff will not look through your child's bag or belongings to check for homework assignments. If your child states that they do not have homework, they will be asked to do something quiet or join another activity until homework block is over.
- WPC staff encourages children to complete their homework responsibilities to allow them to enjoy afternoon WPC activities as well as quality time at home.
- WPC staff provides homework assistance but are not responsible for finishing homework with your child if they do not finish during their scheduled homework time. Parents should always check homework for accuracy and completion.

Clothing

WPC follows the Westford Public Schools' dress code as stated in student handbooks. Parents are responsible for sending children with inadequate clothing and footwear to maintain good health during outdoor play in all suitable weather conditions. Please label your child's clothing and personal belongings. All lost, unlabeled items will be placed in the school's *Lost & Found* boxes.

Personal Electronic Device Ban

We require that WPC participants **do not** bring personal electronic devices, such as an iPod, tablet, Game Boy, or cell phone to the program. These expensive items can be damaged or lost, and our staff cannot ensure the safety of such equipment. Westford Recreation is not responsible for any stolen, damaged, or lost devices.

Progress Reports

EEC requires us to complete progress reports on the children. These progress reports will be distributed once a year after the winter break. If parents/guardians have any questions or concerns, they may request a meeting with the Program Director.

Confidentiality

All children's records will be kept confidential; the distribution of records is prohibited. Should a child's record be subpoenaed, the Program Director will inform the parent/guardian in writing and maintain a log to whom the information was released.

Toileting

If your child has an accident, we will bag the soiled clothes and put them in the child's backpack. The child will be given dry clothes, and an incident report will be filled out to notify the parents.

Snacks

The Westford Partnership for Children does not provide snacks for the children. Please pack your child a snack for them to have after school. Labeling the snack "after school snack" may help avoid your child eating their afterschool snack during school hours. We keep crackers or goldfish as a backup snack, but it is not meant to feed your child every day.

Children with Disabilities

The Westford Recreation Department will accept children with disabilities only if the staff and facility can meet the needs of the child in question. The Program Director will meet with the parent/guardian prior to admitting the child to the program to determine whether the program will fit the needs of the child, parents, and program.

Health Care Policy

While we strive to provide the safest environment possible for your child, accidents will happen. WPC staff are trained in First Aid and CPR procedures and will provide basic care. In an emergency, a staff member will call the emergency number 911 and then contact parents/guardians. If parents/guardians cannot be reached, one of the emergency contacts listed on your *Child Information Form* will be notified.

We will make sure that your child receives the necessary emergency treatment, including treatment by paramedics. Your signature on the *Child Information Form* grants authorization for emergency treatment for your child. If your child needs to be taken to the nearest medical care facility by ambulance, one qualified staff member will accompany your child to the hospital.

Any child with any of the following will not be allowed to participate in our program:

- Fever (101°F oral or 100°F under the arm), until 24 hours free from fever without fever-reducing medication.
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Head lice.
- Fever accompanied by a change in behavior.
- Unusual lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, or other signs of possible severe illness
- Rash, unless determined to be non-communicable by a physician.
- Infectious conjunctivitis (pink eye), until 24 hours after treatment is started.
- Impetigo (contagious skin infection), until 24 hours after treatment is started.
- Strep throat, until 24 hours after treatment is started.
- Other symptoms which may indicate the contraction of a serious, communicable disease.

If your child becomes ill while in our care, we will call parents/guardians and you or a designee will be required to take your child home immediately. If your child is sent home because of illness, they must be free of any symptoms for at least 24 hours before returning to the program, without the use of medication for the purpose of treating said symptoms). NO credit or refund will be given for the day your child is sent home from the program. In the event of a prolonged illness/medical reason, credit will only be given with a doctor's note stating that the child cannot participate in the program. We are required to report any known or suspected case of communicable disease to the local health authorities. We will also notify the school as well as families of children who became exposed to communicable diseases. Please notify us if your child should become infected with a communicable disease or condition. It

is possible that they may have infected others, so it is important that you notify us so that we can inform other families as well as the school. Your child's name will not be revealed.

Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP)

If your child has a chronic condition or illness, please submit an Individual Health Care Plan at the time of registration. The Program Site Director can request a meeting to discuss the IHCP and to ask any questions that will help facilitate/implement the IHCP successfully.

Any ALLERGIES or special health conditions should be brought to the site staff's attention as soon as possible. Allergies are listed on the initial child intake form. A confidential allergy list is posted at each site. Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) must be completed by the physician and signed off by the parent.

Due to the sensitive nature of children's medications and the state mandates, we are now requiring all medications and completed Individual Health Care Plan forms be brought to the recreation office before your child's first day of the program. Your child CAN NOT attend until all forms as well as medications are received according to your child's IHCP. (example: if your child's plan calls for Benedryl before the use of an epi-pen for a mild reaction you must provide Benedryl as well as an Epi-Pen for the site to have on hand.)

Plan for Administering Medication

If a child is no longer ill but requires prescription medication to complete a prescribed dosage, the Program Site Director, Assistant Site Director, or Site Leader will administer it. The Department of Early Education and Care directives are as follows:

1. All staff who administer medication are required to take EEC Medication Administration Training and be trained by the parent/guardian. Training verification must be signed off on the IHCP.
2. NO prescription or non-prescription medication shall be administered to a child without written parental authorization that indicates the medications for their child.
3. All prescription and non-prescription medication shall be administered only with a written order from a physician, which must include the label on the medication. Over-the-counter medications (Tylenol, Dimetapp, etc.) will only be administered or stored by the program with a written physician's order. If an over-the-counter medication is ordered, we require specific instructions as to dosage, schedule, and term.
4. For topical non-prescriptions, written parental authorization is required.
5. All medications must come in their original packaging with original instructions.
6. Emergency medication such as Epi-pens must always be available.
7. The program will never administer the "first dose" of medication.
8. All medication times are documented in the EEC Medical Permission Form. This form will become part of the permanent file.

RULES, BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT, AND DISCIPLINE

WPC staff is trained to use positive behavior management techniques. In all situations, we communicate with the child's parents/guardians. If it is not possible to resolve the issue, we may determine that early dismissal from the program is necessary.

We believe in a positive approach to managing children's behavior using redirection and dialogue. Our goal is to assist in developing self-control and engage children in socially acceptable behaviors. Adults will model, coach, and encourage guidance techniques of discipline that are fair, consistent, and respectful of children. This is based on the understanding of the individual needs and behavior of children at varying developmental levels. Simple and understandable rules are established so expectations and limitations for children are clearly defined. Acceptable guidance techniques of our staff include:

- Focusing on and reinforcing positive behavior using encouragement and words of praise
- Anticipation of problem-triggering situations
- Soliciting cooperation

- Involving children in setting rules and in discussions on how to handle inappropriate behavior.
- Provide alternatives to undesirable behavior.
- Remove the child from stressful situations.
- Allowing a chance to regroup and regain control in a quiet and relaxed area.
- Limit the child's participation in any action that triggers unacceptable behaviors.

Site directors may remove a child from an activity if necessary. Parents/guardians will be contacted as the need arises. If children are physically or emotionally harming themselves or others or are a threat to the safety of themselves or others, parents/guardians will be notified immediately.

Plan to Avoid Suspension and Termination

It is the goal of the program to avoid termination and suspension of a child. Staff will inform the director of any concerns, behavioral or developmental. If a child is not cooperating or following the rules, we will first try to redirect the behavior through adult intervention and guidance techniques. We will also attempt to provide options and choices for a child to help bring about positive change. If the issue is of a serious nature, you will be called for immediate pickup of your child.

1. If a child is unable to gain control, the child will be given a warning that they will have to take time away from the group.
2. If a child does not respond to the warning or if the behavior requires immediate adult intervention and/or consequences, the child will be removed from the group. The child will indicate when they are ready to return to the group after talking with an adult. An incident report will be issued, and the parents/guardians will be required to sign the report to acknowledge receipt. Parents/guardians are encouraged to request a meeting with the WPC Director and Site Director at any time.

AFTER THREE INCIDENT REPORTS HAVE BEEN RECORDED, YOUR CHILD MAY BE SUSPENDED/TERMINATED FROM THE PROGRAM. NO REFUNDS WILL BE GIVEN.

WPC will suspend/terminate any child from the program for inappropriate and/or unacceptable behavior. The following are examples of inappropriate and/or unacceptable behavior:

- Behavior that leads to physical or emotional harm to others and/or assault to another child, staff member, or adult
- Disruptive behavior requiring adult intervention and causing consistent disruption of the daily schedule and/or events.
- Fighting
- Bullying
- Harassment
- Threat or physical harm
- Throwing objects (e.g. rocks, scissors, etc.)
- Possession of weapons, mock weapons, or any article or instrument that may be used as a weapon.
- Inappropriate actions (language and/or behavior)
- Disrespect (language and/or behavior)
- Insubordination: Flagrant opposition to authority (language and/or behavior)
- Deliberate destruction, damage to, or defacement of space including buildings, furniture, books, and/or materials.
- Theft/stealing
- Leaving the group or walking out of the program
- Smoking or possession of cigarettes, lighters, or matches.
- False alarm or bomb threat

Please Note: Depending on the circumstance, it is at the discretion of the Site Director and WPC Director to decide the length of the suspension period, a termination decision, and/or if a child needs to be picked up immediately. The above is NOT a complete list of every type of misconduct. If a child engages in misconduct that does not fall within any of the above categories, the Site Director and/or WPC Director will issue an appropriate consequence.

If your child's behavior does not warrant a suspension from the program, we may issue a "loss of privilege" – a consequence during program hours. This could be a restriction such as withholding the privilege of participating in a special or favorite activity.

The following practices are strictly forbidden:

- No child will be subjected to cruel or severe punishment, humiliation, physical or verbal abuse, neglect, or abusive treatment.
- No child will be denied food as a form of punishment.
- No child shall be punished for soiling, wetting, not using the toilet or any other unusual or excessive practices for toileting.
- Corporal punishment will NEVER be used, including spanking.

Bullying

Refer to Westford Public Schools Bullying Policy and Massachusetts General Laws regarding bullying. Bullying is most defined as an individual being exposed repeatedly over time, to intentional injury or discomfort inflicted by one or more individuals. Bullying will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including suspension or termination for students and termination for employees. All allegations of bullying will be promptly and reasonably investigated.

Harassment

Refer to Westford Public Schools Harassment Policy and Massachusetts General Laws regarding harassment. All contact and communication will be free from all forms of harassment due to race, gender, sexual orientation, color, religion, national origin, and physical or emotional challenges.

Non-Discrimination

We do not discriminate by any means protected by law, including race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, or disability. We will provide reasonable accommodation for children with disabilities. However, we may restrict the admission of children if we need to hire another staff member specifically for the purpose of caring for your child.

Please inform us if:

- Your child is on a special education plan (IEP) during the school year. Please make us aware of this and provide us with a copy of the plan. It is very helpful for our staff to know what methods and strategies the school is using. In order to access this valuable information, you must complete the "Release of Information" section on the back of the *Child Information Form*.
- There are changes occurring in your child's life that may affect their attitude or behavior during program hours.

Mandated Reporting of Child Abuse/Neglect

All staff members of the WPC are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect. As such, we are required by law to report any suspected incidents of possible child abuse and neglect to the Department of Children and Families, Lowell, Ma (978) 452-8970.

Children exhibiting suspicious bruises, abrasions, burns, or other physical marks will be reported to the Department of Children and Families

In addition, we are required to report to the appropriate authorities any suspicion of any action or situation which may endanger the life of a child in our care, including alcohol intoxication or drug influence. Children will not be released to parents/guardians or designees who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Police will be called immediately.

Parent Involvement and Participation

Parents/guardians are always welcome to visit our program. We also welcome you and other family members to share your interests, talents, and occupations with the children in our program.

Although parents may come unannounced, for the safety and security of all children, we ask that parents/guardians visiting the program make arrangements with the Site Director in advance. Parents/guardians who will be visiting for an extended period or on a regular basis will be required to pass a Background Records check.

Parent Behavior Policy

WPC expects that all adults in contact with the staff, program, families, administrators, children, and board members always act respectfully and appropriately. Behavior, which is abusive, disruptive, or uncooperative will not be tolerated. Such inappropriate behavior is grounds for review by the Site Director and WPC Director. Inappropriate behavior includes parents/guardians or designees arriving on the premise under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

In the event of inappropriate conduct, we will follow these procedures:

- The individual involved will be asked to attend a meeting in a timely manner to address the immediate concerns.
- Documentation of the inappropriate conduct and the subsequent meeting will be placed on file.
- When warranted, considerations to suspend, terminate, or decline re-enrollment of the family in the program?
- Families will be informed, in writing, of the decisions made by the WPC Director

If we feel your child's safety is being compromised in any way, we will help seek alternative transportation. We may also call the appropriate authorities, if necessary. This decision will be made to ensure the safety and well-being of program children, families, staff, and administrators.

Referral Services

The WPC After School Program uses the following policy for referring parents/guardians to appropriate social, mental health, educational and medical services for their children:

1. Staff members should bring any concerns or issues to the Program Director.
2. The Director will observe the child on three separate occasions to confirm the reason for the assessment.
3. Observations will be recorded and kept on file for further review prior to referral.
4. If the Director feels the child would benefit from additional services, following further evaluation a plan will be presented to the parent/ guardian(s).
5. The Program Director will schedule a meeting with the parent/guardian(s) to notify them of the concern. The meeting will be requested within 3 working days of the decision for referral services.

Court Orders, Custody Agreements, and Restraining Orders

Occasionally, Recreation programs are put into a difficult position by parents/guardians who are involved in a custody dispute. If there are any of the above-listed situations, it is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to notify the Site Director and WPC Director. Difficulties of this type must be discussed with the directors so that we can clarify our procedures and limitations. The parent/guardian MUST bring a legible photocopy of the court order in its entirety. Legally, without said documentation, we MUST release the child from any parent/guardian that is picking up. In the absence of a court order, the program cannot deny a parent/guardian access to his or her child. We cannot take word of mouth or written notes from parents/guardians stating any of the above.

Even with a court order, our ability to deny access is limited to promptly notifying the custodial parent/guardian and the proper police authority should unsanctioned contact be attempted or occur at the program. Staff members will be instructed not to place themselves in jeopardy to mediate a family dispute or to attempt to enforce a court order. If an unsanctioned parent/guardian chooses

to leave the program with the child with a court order in force, the custodial parent/guardian will be required to sign a waiver acknowledging the program's inability to physically obstruct a hostile effort to take the child from the program.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANS

WPC Afterschool Staff will conduct monthly evacuation drills. The evacuation routes will be placed at every exit. These procedures will mimic the school's evacuation plan and will frequently be discussed with the children so that they may have a speedy, stress-free, and safe drill.

Evacuation Plans

In the event of a fire, natural disaster, or other event (e.g. chemical spill, bomb threat): The children will evacuate the building and follow the procedure for fire drills. The staff will leave the building with the children after making a careful sweep of the building for any lingering children and take with them the emergency contact information for children, emergency medical treatment consent forms, special medications needed by the children, first aid supplies, and cell phones. The staff will take a head count outside the building from the attendance list. The children and staff will walk to the far corner of the parking lot of their respective schools. The Director or Site Coordinator will notify the appropriate authorities (police, fire, etc.) using their cell phone. Neither the staff nor the children will return to the building until clearance is given by the authorities.

Loss of Power, Heat, or Hot Water: When a power outage occurs at the schools, while at the afterschool program, the back-up generators will automatically go on and the staff will communicate with the custodians about the timeline of the outage. The children will be kept in the cafeteria to ensure they are all in one spot. The parents will be notified and the decision to close the program will be based on the number of hours left in the day, season of the year, etc. If the power outage causes a lack of heat in the winter and the building temperature drops below 65 degrees within 2-3 hours, we will call the parents to pick up their children. Emergency lighting along with cell phones will provide some time before we need to leave the building. In the event of the loss of hot water occurring during our open hours, the program will continue its normal operation until all children are picked up by their parents.

In the event of a tornado or high winds: The staff will move children to the interior of the buildings, away from windows. Children will be instructed to crouch down on the floor and cover the back of their heads with their hands. The staff will communicate with the custodians regarding gas and water shut off at such an event.

In the event of an earthquake: If inside, the staff will instruct the children to kneel under a desk, table, or bench. If there are not enough sturdy pieces of furniture to get under, kneel next to an interior wall, but away from windows, overhead light fixtures, and all pieces of furniture that might fall over. The children should stay under cover until the shaking stops. The children should hold on to the table leg or desk. If outside, the staff should lead the children into the open, away from buildings, fences, trees, utility wires, and streetlights.

In the event of a severe lightning storm: When inside, the children and staff should avoid using the telephone (except for emergencies). Use of the computer and other electrical appliances should also be suspended. When outside, the children and staff should return indoors immediately. If in a wooded area, they should seek shelter under the thick growth of small trees.

Absent Child Protocol

WPC Staff uses the following policy if a child fails to appear at the designated area after school:

1. Check with the school office to see if they were in school.
2. If the child attended school and did not show up, check with the student's teacher (the school office will assist with this)
3. The school office will immediately call the bus company and see if he or she is on the bus.
4. Phone the parent to let them know they did not come to the program and let them know what steps are being taken.
5. Record the incident in the incident log.

Missing Child during program hours

1. A staff member is to alert the Program Director and all staff present of the missing child immediately.
2. Children are to stay with the group leader and/or assistant group leader.
3. The group leader along with the Program Director will check bathrooms/hallways/outside areas, etc.
4. When the child is located the Program Director or staff in charge will make the announcement "child safe".
5. If not found after 5 minutes the Program Director or staff in charge will call 911. The Program Director will alert parents/guardians of the situation.

Weather Cancellations

We do not provide programs when schools are closed due to inclement weather or other conditions beyond the control of Westford Parks and Recreation. There are NO refunds, credits, or substitution of days/blocks based on inclement weather/school closings.

If school is dismissed early due to the weather or for any other unforeseen emergency, children in the WPC program will be released at the same time as the rest of the children in their school. Please make arrangements in advance so that your child and your child's teacher know where your child will go and how they will be transported. Please make sure you have filled out the *WPC Participation Form* and have given it to your child's teacher.

If a weather alert is issued during WPC program hours, you will be notified and expected to pick up your child as quickly as possible. If you are delayed, please notify their WPC Site Director and arrange for an authorized designee to pick up your child.

The WPC program WILL RUN on days when there is a delayed school opening.

Announcements about school closings or delayed openings can be found on:

Radio stations: WBZ-1030, WCAP-980 and WRKO-680

Television stations: WBZ- Channel 4, WCVB- Channel 5, and Westford Cable Access Television- Channel 8

On our website: www.westfordrec.com

EMAIL: Sign up for our email list to receive instant program updates, changes, cancellations, etc.