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**TOM HARGROVE & ANITA GROVER, MD CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER  
KIDS UNLIMITED PARENT HANDBOOK 2023-2024**

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# **WELCOME TO THE NEW CANAAN YMCA TOM HARGROVE AND ANITA GROVER, M.D. CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER!**

Thank you for allowing us to serve your child in our program. We look forward to the year ahead and hope this information answers many of your questions. If you need further assistance, please contact Kristen Godin, Assistant Childcare Director, at 203-920-1649 or [kgodin@newcanaanymca.org](mailto:kgodin@newcanaanymca.org). As always, we appreciate your feedback and look forward to getting to know you and your family!

## **NEW CANAAN YMCA MISSION**

Enriching all people in spirit, mind, and body. The New Canaan YMCA is committed to providing programs and services that promote the health and well-being of our members and our community. We are founded on Christian principles and are guided by our core values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.

### **I. Philosophy & Objectives**

The Kids Unlimited Afterschool Program provides children in grades K-6 with quality care during after school hours. The purpose of the afterschool program is to provide an environment to promote self-confidence and growth in children through self-discovery, choices, varied environments, physical play, artistic development, quiet times, and homework assistance.

The happiness, safety, and well-being of the children enrolled are the primary objective of all staff associated with the program. The staff provides a warm and nurturing environment which is conducive to the developmental growth of each child. The program is flexible enough to accommodate different age groups, as well as fulfill special needs of the children by allowing them to take part in their favorite activities at the YMCA.

The program is oriented toward the enrichment of the family. Parents are invited to visit the program at any time.

### **II. Enrollment**

New participants for the 2023-2024 school year will be selected by lottery. Lottery forms, available online and at the Front Desk, will be accepted from May 1, 2023, until May 26, 2023, at 12 noon. No late submissions; no exceptions.

On June 5, 2023, all parents who submitted lottery forms will be notified that they are being offered a spot or that their child has been placed on a wait list.

#### **Revision of Enrollment Days/Request for Additional Days:**

If you would like your child to attend the program on a day that he/she is not normally registered, it must be arranged with the Director beforehand. If space is available on the day, your child may attend for an additional fee of \$40.00 per day.

### **Reduction of Days/Withdrawal:**

- Reduction of Days: A written notice of a reduction in a participant's number of days must be submitted to the Director at least one week before the upcoming draft date.
- Withdrawal from Program: The Director must receive written notice at least one week before the upcoming draft date. If one week's notice is not received, no refund will be processed.
- At any time, if the staff feels that a child's enrollment is detrimental to the health/safety or progress of himself/herself or other children, and withdrawal is deemed necessary, a pro-rated refund of the remaining tuition will be returned to the parent if applicable.

### **III. Membership**

Participants of Kids Unlimited must have a current YMCA Youth membership or be part of a Family Membership. Membership must be paid prior to the start of the program and remain active throughout the child's time at Kids Unlimited. Youth membership fees will be processed automatically when due.

### **IV. Medical and General Information**

All children must always have a copy of his/her current school physical examination on file at the YMCA. Completed and up-to-date required paperwork must also be on file for each child to be admitted to the program.

It is the parent's responsibility to be sure phone numbers of emergency contacts, authorized pick-up persons and physicians are current. This is of the utmost importance in case of an emergency.

All children attending this program must be toilet trained.

No medications are administered at Kids Unlimited except in the case of emergency needs. See the Director regarding special situations or if you have any questions.

### **V. Tuition and Billing**

#### **ALL PARTICIPANTS**

5 days/week - \$700.00/month

4 days/week - \$619.00/month

3 days/week - \$488.00/month

#### **Billing and Payment Policy**

Tuition is due and will be automatically drafted via credit card (Aug-May) 15 days prior to the month of attendance.

Monthly charges will include tuition fees and may also include any of the following fees as incurred:

- Additional Attendance Days/Hours Fee (p. 1-2)
- YMCA membership fees will be processed automatically when due (p. 2)
- "Finder's Fee" for absent child (p. 3)
- Late Pick-Up Fee (p. 4)

Monthly billing concerns should be addressed to the Kids Unlimited Director at least one week prior to the monthly payment deadline.

If full payment is still not received by the first Monday of the following month, the child may not be allowed to attend until full payment is made.

- **Note:** Tuition is required, regardless of absence, due to illness or personal vacation. This includes Covid related absences and/or classroom closures. Public school vacation days have been factored out of the annual tuition payment.

Tuition assistance may be available. Applications are available at the YMCA Front Desk, or you may contact Diana Riolo at the YMCA for further information: 203-920-1653.

## **VI. Hours of Operation & General Procedures**

### **Hours of Care**

The Kids Unlimited program follows the New Canaan Public School calendar. The program operates every school day from school dismissal until 6:00 PM. Children who attend New Canaan Public Schools are transported to the YMCA via the bus company contracted by the New Canaan Public School system.

### **Absence Procedure**

The Kids Unlimited program has a Voice Mail System for absence notification; it can be reached 24 hours a day at: 203-920-1649. **NO EMAILS PLEASE.** Please call before 11:00 AM when absence is anticipated on a child's scheduled day.

When calling the Voice Mail, be sure to speak slowly and:

1. Indicate you are calling for Kids Unlimited.
2. State: The date / your full name / your child's full name.
3. Record your message.
4. Leave a phone number where you may be easily reached on that day.

**Note:** The YMCA's Front Desk does not take absence messages.

### **"Finder's Fee"**

In cases when a child does not arrive at the New Canaan YMCA on their scheduled day, and the Kids Unlimited staff has not been informed of their absence, the child is classified as a "missing child" according to the state licensing guidelines.

Verifying the safety and location of "missing children" takes a considerable amount of time. The safety of each child is of utmost importance to us, and the absence procedures must be followed. Parents will be charged a "Finder's Fee" of \$20.00 on any occasion that the Kids Unlimited staff have not been notified of a child's absence on their scheduled day.

### **Pick-Up Procedure**

Participants of Kids Unlimited must be picked up by the end of the program day (6:00 PM) by an authorized person from the "Pick Up/Emergency Contacts Form" which must be filled out and submitted prior to starting the program. Authorized persons will be asked to show photo identification before a child is released to him or her. It is the family's responsibility to make sure the list is current.

### **Late Pick-Up Policy**

A late pick-up fee will be charged to any parent/guardian arriving after the end of the program day. The late fee will be \$35.00 per child after 6:05pm. After the first charge of \$35.00, \$1.00 will be charged per 1-minute interval or any part thereof. If possible, as a courtesy, please call and let the teachers know if you anticipate being late on any given day. Parents/guardians who are consistently late may be requested to find another program which better meets their schedule needs.

### **Plan for a Left Child**

The daily closing time for the center is 6:00 PM. All participants must be picked up by that time. If a child remains at the center past closing time, every effort will be made to contact one of the child's parents. At least two Rainbow Station staff (of at least 18 years of age) will remain at the center with the child.

- If the parents cannot be reached, one of the three emergency contact people will be called to pick up the child. These are names provided by the child's parent and indicated on the child's "Pick-Up/Emergency Contact" form. Photo identification will be required prior to the release of the child.
- Families will be informed via email, voicemail, or text message that their child has been released to one of the three contacts. A note will also be posted on the door if a parent arrives and find the Center closed.
- The teacher will continue to call the parents or emergency contacts until someone has been reached.
- If the Center cannot contact the parent(s) and emergency contacts within two hours of the center closing, the child will be considered abandoned, and the police will be called. If this occurs, the Center may consider expelling the family from the Center.
- If police involvement is necessary, an email, voicemail, or text to the parent and/or a note will be left on the YMCA entrance door indicating the location of the child.

### **Early Dismissal from School**

On days New Canaan Public School have early dismissal, the program will be in operation to those who normally attend on that day at no additional fee. Children who do not normally attend the program on that day may come for an additional fee of \$40.00 and prior approval from the Director.

**Note:** New Canaan Public Schools' early dismissal and vacation days do not always coincide with other districts. Children who normally attend the Kids Unlimited program on those days can be dropped off at 3:15pm.

## **Vacation Days**

During most of the public-school vacation weeks, as well as on most single-day holidays, the YMCA offers a "Vacation Camp" program. The program is available from 8:00am-6:00pm during these times to accommodate working parents.

The Vacation Camp program is not part of the Kids Unlimited After-school program. The Kids Unlimited annual tuition does not include payment for public school vacation weeks or single-day holidays when both the public schools and Kids Unlimited are closed.

Kids Unlimited participants receive information about Vacation Camp prior to the community and may attend the extended day programs from 8:00-9:00am and/or 5:00-6:00pm at no additional charge.

There will be no programs, Kids Unlimited or Vacation Camp, on the following days\*:

- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving break
- Christmas vacation
- New Year's Day
- Valentine's Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day

\*Schedule subject to change due to school schedule, weather conditions, etc.

## **School Closings**

If New Canaan Public Schools are closed due to weather, the Kids Unlimited program will be cancelled. On these days, a camp program may be offered. Parents will be notified by 7:00am on the morning of the school closure if a camp is being offered.

If New Canaan Public Schools dismiss the students from school early due to weather, the children scheduled to attend Kids Unlimited on that day will be transported to the YMCA as usual. Parents will be contacted to come and pick up their child(ren) by a designated time.

If the scheduled children have already arrived at the New Canaan YMCA from their respective schools, and early shut down of the facility is deemed necessary, parents will be contacted to come and pick up the child by a designated time.

**Note:** Refunds are not granted for the above conditions or any acts of God beyond the YMCA's control.

## **VII. About the Program**

### **Snack**

The snack served daily includes water, two food groups and either a fruit or vegetable. The monthly snack menu is posted on site. If your child does not care for a snack food on a day, you may send him/her with a snack from home (healthy food and beverage, please). It is recommended that parents pack a piece of fruit daily for their child's late afternoon needs.

### **Participation in Y Classes**

The Kids Unlimited staff will be happy to drop off and pick up your child(ren) from any YMCA extracurricular classes that you have signed them up for during Kids Unlimited operating hours.

YMCA classes are not part of the Kids Unlimited Afterschool Program. The Kids Unlimited annual tuition does not include the program fees for participation in any classes or programs except as specifically stated in this handbook. Children will be taken and picked up from classes by Kids Unlimited staff but are not supervised by Kids Unlimited staff during the class.

### **Weekly Free Swim and Bouncing Bears**

All Kids Unlimited participants can enjoy an hour of free swim weekly on Friday afternoon. Children in Kindergarten and 1st grade will enjoy 30 minutes of Bouncing Bears one afternoon a week. Children in 2nd to 6th grade will have an organized sports class one afternoon a week.

### **Homework Assistance**

Monday through Thursday, a quiet time is set aside for all children to do homework. We encourage all children to do their homework, and we provide staff assistance and guidance when needed.

### **Parent Involvement**

The Kids Unlimited and YMCA staff welcome and encourage parental involvement. Please feel free to visit the program at any time, as well as to bring any unique skills, talents, family traditions or heritage you have, which might enrich our program. Please contact the Director if you wish to do so.

### **Communications**

Monthly newsletters, reminders, invitations, etc. will inform parents of upcoming events and dates. All Kids Unlimited communications will be done via email.

### **Birthdays**

Parents of children in Kids Unlimited should check with the YMCA Director if any special plans are desired. Parents are welcome to come and participate with their child on this special day.

### **Special Events**

Throughout the year, various special events are planned for the children. Many coincide with holidays, seasons, or just plain fun!

Parents are welcome to participate in any of our special events and holiday celebrations. We encourage parents to provide any additional information we may need to be sensitive to the cultural needs of each family.

## **Family Nights**

Throughout the year, evenings of dinner and family fun are planned for Kids Unlimited participants. It proves to be a wonderful opportunity for parents to meet, interact with one another and the staff. We hope you will join us!

## **Field Trips**

Occasionally, field trips will be scheduled away from the YMCA building. Parents will be informed about any field trip in advance. In some instances, nominal fees are charged. Trip permission is automatically granted via the Kids Unlimited "Permission Agreement" Items "C & D", located in the required paperwork packet.

## **VIII. Special Plans & Procedures**

### **Plan for the Supervision of Children**

#### **Indoor Time**

There will always be adequate numbers of staff on hand, to maintain the required state ratio of one-to-ten and to supervise the children safely and responsibly.

During scheduled activities and less structured times during the day, the children will be divided into small groups (10 or less) with the appropriate number of staff, to reinforce a more relaxed and low-key environment.

Routines will be adhered to whenever possible; however, teachers will be flexible in changing activities to maintain small group sizes (10 or less) when children lose interest in one activity and move on to another.

Special activities will be planned, and room arrangements will be reflected in the schedule to avoid confusion on the part of children or staff.

At no time shall group size exceed 20 children. Children will be assigned and circulate between activity areas to maintain small group sizes (10 or less). Because classrooms are self-contained, teachers are always in sight of all children.

#### **Outdoor Time**

Children will go outdoors once daily when the weather allows. Children will be taken outdoors if the temperature is over 35 degrees and there is no precipitation.

Staff will spend outdoor time interacting with the children as they play. Staff members will supervise, standing close to equipment. The other staff members will supervise the overall fence in playground areas.

In the playing fields, the state required ratio of one-to-ten staff-to-children will be maintained. Staff will plan a variety of activities to be available to the children. They will interact with the children as they choose activities and play games. One staff member will be directly involved in the activities. One other staff member will supervise the overall field area. Group size will not exceed 20 children in either area at any time.



## **Behavior Management & Discipline Policy**

Behavior The safety and well-being of each child in our care is our number one priority. When behavior expectations are not met, YMCA staff will implement our behavior management policy to help correct the undesired behavior. Listed below are the steps utilized by our staff:

1. Verbal warning given explaining why behavior is inappropriate and shown positive alternatives rather than being told "no."
2. Show children how their actions affect others and remind them of the rules.
3. Encourage children to talk to others about the situation.
4. Teach children to take time to refocus and redirect.
5. Report issues through verbal communication with parent.
6. Parent conference with director.
7. If inappropriate behavior continues, a child may be suspended from the program for up to one week.
8. Prolonged disruptive and inappropriate behavior will result in dismissal from Kids Unlimited.

\*Extreme Behavior Issues: In extreme cases, a child's behavior may warrant immediate suspension or expulsion from the program. Such cases include the use of profane or abusive language, any aggressive behavior which threatens or causes physical harm to other participants or staff, or elopement (running away).

## **Discipline**

The Discipline Procedures used at the Tom Hargrove and Anita Grover, MD Child Development Center:

The center is based on the teachings of the National Association for the Education of Young Children as outlined in "A Guide to Discipline, Helping Children Learn Self-Control." When children exhibit anti-social behavior:

1. They are shown positive alternatives rather than just told "no."
2. They are shown how their actions affect others and are reminded of the rules.
3. They are encouraged to talk to the other person(s) if others are involved.
4. They may choose a "break" period, only to last as long as the child feels is needed to calm down before discussing the situation. Breaks can be taken anywhere in the classroom as long as they are in sight of the teachers. Children will, most of the time, be directed to the reading center or table where it is quiet.

Good behavior is consistently rewarded during the day with words of praise. The staff will establish fair, simple rules and enforce them consistently. We believe these procedures help children feel more in control of their own emotions and better able to handle anger.

The following are behavior management techniques that will never be employed at the New Canaan YMCA Thomas Hargrove and Anita Grover, M.D Child Development Center:

- Staff will never use a hard or abusive tone of voice or language towards children.
- Staff will never employ any form of physical or corporal punishment.
- Physical restraint will not be used unless it is necessary to protect the health or safety of the child or others.
- Children will never be deprived of food, and food will never be used as a punishment device.

All the above and any other form of discipline which could be physically or emotionally detrimental to a child will never be employed at this center.

## **Caring For a Sick Child**

### **Illness**

The YMCA reserves the right to deny any child admittance to the program on any given day, for reasons of obvious illness, or to request early departure, should symptoms become obvious during the day. If a child has not attended school on a given day due to illness, they may not attend Kids Unlimited.

If your child is kept home from school for any reason other than sickness, he/she can be admitted into the program. As a courtesy to the staff, please call before bringing the child to the program, to let the staff know he/she will be attending.

The child will be sent home from the program if he/she shows evidence of any of the following:

- Is unable to participate in usual daily activities
- Excessive crankiness or irritability
- Axillary temperature (under arm) of 100° or more
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea, defined as an increased number of stools compared with the child's normal pattern with increased stool water and/or decreased form.
- Persistent cough
- Open sores that cannot be covered
- Any contagious disease or infection including a rash, drainage from the eye or head lice.

The child may return to the program when:

- Temperature has been normal (child has been fever-free) for 24 hours-one full day\*
- Diarrhea has stopped for 24 hours-one full day\*
- Vomiting has stopped for 24 hours-one full day\*
- A pediatrician has checked persistent cough
- A pediatrician has checked questionable rash
- 24 hours after medication for strep, conjunctivitis & any other infectious disease
- After treatment with a head lice medication and staff has determined that the child is lice and nit free
- Children with chicken pox may return after their pox have scabbed over and are no longer open sores
- Upon request, Physician's note submitted to Director

**\*IF A CHILD IS SENT HOME FROM THE CENTER, THEY MUST BE OUT FOR ONE FULL DAY, EXAMPLE-IF A CHILD IS SENT HOME ON MONDAY, THE EARLIEST THEY COULD RETURN WOULD BE WEDNESDAY AND ONLY IF THEY HAVE BEEN SYMPTOM FREE FOR 24 HOURS.**

**If a child contracts a communicable disease (including Covid-19), the parent must immediately notify the Director.**

### **Procedures for Caring for a Sick Child**

When a child becomes ill or develops signs of a communicable condition while at the YMCA, he/she will be moved to an isolation area. The Director or classroom teacher will contact the child's parent to take the child home. A staff person will be with the child until he/she is picked up by the authorized person.

- If the child's parents cannot be reached, the emergency contact names will be used. These names have been provided to the center by the parents; and a signed release/permission form is on file at the Center.
- The emergency contact person will be asked for photo identification before the child is released.
- It is the parent's responsibility to ensure phone numbers of emergency contacts, authorized pick-up persons and physicians are kept up to date. This is of the utmost importance in case of an emergency.