

Member & Parent Handbook



Table of Contents

3 - 4

About Us

Mission
What We Do
Youth Development Strategy
Programs
Kidstop

5 - 8

Membership

Club Hours
Inclement Weather
Emergency Drills and Reunification
School Attendance
Dress Code
Membership Guidelines
Member Conduct & Discipline
Cell Phone Policy
Late Pick-Up Policy
Transportation

9 - 12

Safety is Key!

Safe Passage Policy
Health & Emergency Procedure
Damage to Club Property
Medicine Policy
First Aid / CPR Training
Concussion Protocol
Non-Smoking and Drug-Free Environment
Telephone Use
Photo Release
Out of Club Contact
Field Trips
Personal Belongings

12

Useful Information

Rentals
Volunteer Opportunities
Survey & Questionnaires

Our Mission

Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Northwest Indiana's mission is to inspire and enable the youth of our communities to realize their full potential as productive, responsible and caring citizens.

What We Do

We are a private, non-profit agency serving grades K-12 and part of a nationwide affiliation of local, autonomous Boys & Girls Clubs working to help youth of all backgrounds. Through programs and activities focused on Academic Success, Good Character & Citizenship, and Healthy Lifestyles, our Clubs offer a variety of academic, cultural, social and recreational experiences for youth.

Our Clubs are facility-based and collectively have over 200 paid professional staff supplemented by volunteers. We complete a full background check of every staff member and volunteer each year.

Five Key Elements

The level of impact a Club has on young people depends how often and how long members participate and how the Club implements the following Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development:

1. **A Safe, Positive Environment:** Club staff, facilities, program offerings and age-appropriate settings create stability, consistency and a sense of physical and emotional safety for members.
2. **Fun:** Clubs generate fun for members. Staff members make the Club feel like home, fostering a family atmosphere.
3. **Supportive Relationships:** Club youth develop meaningful relationships with peers and staff.
4. **Opportunities and Expectations:** Club youth acquire physical, social, technological, artistic and life skills. Clubs encourage members to develop moral character and behave ethically.
5. **Recognition:** Clubs recognize and affirm young people's self-worth and accomplishments by celebrating achievements.

Programs

Below is a sample of programs our Clubs offer in our three priority outcome areas. We also offer several programs that focus on arts, STEM, digital arts, leadership and more.

Good Character & Citizenship

Keystone & Torch Clubs: These unique leadership development experiences provide opportunities for members ages 14 - 18 (Keystone Club) and ages 11 - 13 (Torch Club). Youth participate in activities that focus on community service, career preparedness, health and fitness and more.

Academic Success

Indiana Kids: Indiana Kids is a program designed to support our members' academic skills. The program is available during the school year for members in grades 1 – 8. This program provides academic help in our homework room, as well as career education activities.

Healthy Lifestyles

Passport to Manhood & SMART Girls: These programs promote healthy lifestyles in our youth by teaching them positive self-esteem, developing healthy relationships and healthy eating habits.

Kidstop

Kidstop has been in operation for over thirty years. During the school year, it is offered before and after school at most Valparaiso Community Schools, as well as Union Center, Simatovich, Discovery Charter and Porter Lakes. It also is offered before school at our South Haven Club, serving both South Haven and Paul Saylor Elementary Schools.

We also run Kidstop during summer break at most Clubs, as well as during the school year on scheduled no-school days (like spring break and records days) when a minimum number of members are registered. Kidstop is a fee-based program.

Membership

At most Clubs, any youth attending school in grades K-12 can become a member. (For Kindergartners, this starts with the start of the school year.)

Membership forms must be completed by a parent/guardian and a \$40 annual membership fee is required to become a member. Memberships are valid for one year from the date of application.

Club Hours

During the school year, all Clubs are open immediately after school until 7 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Clubs will close at 6 p.m. on Fridays. There may be special circumstances when a Club may close early due to staff development. Advance notice is given.

On scheduled no-school days (including holiday breaks and spring break), our Clubs will not open. We do, however, offer Kidstop at some locations on those days.

During summer break, Kidstop is available and many Clubs have drop-in hours, which vary by Club. There are certain “shutdown” days when the Clubs are not open; typically at the end of summer break in order to prepare for fall programming.

Our Clubs are closed during the following holidays: New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day. These closings include Kidstop.

Inclement Weather

Club locations will be closed if the weather is severe enough to cancel or force an early dismissal from school for the day. To find out if your Club will be closed, check the following sources: bgcgreaternwi.org or our Facebook and Twitter profiles. If schools are closed, Clubs are closed. If school dismisses early due to weather, Clubs will NOT be open and buses will NOT bring members to Clubs. Please make alternate plans and discuss your severe weather plan with your child(ren).

Emergency Drills and Reunification

There are three emergency-preparedness drills conducted on a quarterly basis: Evacuation, Severe Weather, and Lockdown. Each of these drills is performed quarterly.

Should it be necessary to evacuate the building and it is deemed unsafe to return for an extended period of time, reunification procedures may be implemented. For each Club, a nearby location has been established where members can safely be reunited with parents/guardians.

School Attendance & Club Participation

If your child did not attend school, excused or unexcused, he/she is not allowed to attend a Club on that day.

Dress Code

Members, parents, and guardians are expected to follow Boys & Girls Club's dress code. Footwear must be worn at all times. Sandals or open-toed shoes are allowed in the Club, but gym shoes must be worn when participating in the gym. Appropriate attire may be required for certain activities.

It is up to the discretion of staff as to what clothing is inappropriate. We tend to follow school guidelines of appropriate attire. Your child may be asked to change clothes or phone home if necessary. Examples of inappropriate clothing include: sagging pants; logos associated with alcohol, drugs, or offensive material; and clothes that are revealing.

Membership Guidelines

These member guidelines apply to all Clubs and Kidstop program. Each Club may post and enforce additional rules at its discretion. Every member must read and understand these rules upon receiving a membership.

1. A current membership is needed in order to participate in Club activities. Only one visit as a guest per child is allowed.
2. Members/guests need to scan their card or sign in at front desk when entering and leaving the Club.
3. All members and parents must adhere to the Safe Passage Policy. See page 8.
4. All members and staff are to treat each other and all property with respect and courtesy.
5. Any behavior that might be described as “bullying” will not be tolerated.
6. Safety is our first priority. (i.e.: running is only allowed in the gym)
7. Appropriate language must be used inside the Club by everyone at all times.
8. Members are to use proper manners at all times in the Club.
9. Maintain your personal space by keeping hands, feet, etc. to yourself.
10. Stay in the Club. If you leave the building with permission (in accordance with our Safe Passage Policy), you must leave the property.
11. No member, regardless of age, will be allowed to return to the Club once they leave the premises for the day without prior approval.
12. Use the main entrance only.
13. Food and drinks are to be kept in the lounge or designated area only.
14. Vending machines need to be used carefully. Refunds are not given unless a staff member witnesses the problem.
15. Coats/jackets/book bags are to be stored in designated Club areas. Please have your name on all items. The Club is not responsible for lost or stolen items. Please leave all valuables at home.
16. A staff member supervises all areas. Any area without a staff member supervising is considered to be closed to members.
17. Tobacco, drugs, alcohol, weapons of any kind, gambling and gang symbols/colors are not permitted on Club property or at Club events.

Member Conduct & Discipline

If members disregard the rights and responsibilities of Club membership, they will be disciplined accordingly. We utilize time-outs, guidance techniques and program suspension when necessary to ensure all members have the opportunity to enjoy their Club experience. Parents/guardians may be contacted if assistance is needed and will be notified immediately if a member needs to be suspended from a program.

Safe Haven: Weapons or other items which may cause harm to others are not permitted at the Club. We reserve the right to check bags or ask members to empty pockets at any time if we suspect a danger to our members.

According to Indiana state law, we have a legal responsibility to immediately report suspected child abuse or neglect. This would include inappropriate contact between members.

Cell Phone/Mobile Device Policy

Please ask your local Club for a copy of our rules regarding the use of mobile devices.

Late Pick-Up Policy

Our program times are posted and are adhered to strictly. Parents are expected to have transportation secured for their children before closing time. In case of an emergency, it is your responsibility to secure alternate transportation for your child. If your child is at the Club after closing time, we will attempt to contact a parent/guardian and/or emergency contacts. If unsuccessful, authorities will be contacted. Clubs charge \$1 per minute, per child, when children are picked up late.

Transportation

Some schools provide transportation to our Clubs after school. In some cases, we provide transportation with Club-owned buses. Please ask at your Club if transportation is available. Additional fees may apply. We do not provide transportation home.

Safe Passage Policy

For members under the age of 12, a parent, guardian or other pre-authorized adult must pick up the member from the Club. Members age 12 and older may leave the Club unescorted with written permission from a parent/guardian. Members 12 and older may also escort other members of their household from the Club.

No member, regardless of age, will be allowed to return to the Club once they leave the premises for the day. The Club will not physically restrain a member that insists on leaving the Club, nor block the facility's exits. Therefore, it is each parent's responsibility to discuss the Club's Safe Passage Policy with his or her child and ensure he or she complies. Our Clubs will not accept responsibility for members who leave unsupervised and in breach of this policy. The Club does, however, reserve the right to discipline members who leave unescorted without written permission, up to and including suspension and termination of membership.

Health & Emergency Procedures

Please do not bring your child to the Club if he/she has signs of illness. If a member becomes ill while at the Club, parents will be notified to pick up their child.

In case of an accident or emergency involving a member, which requires medical attention, proper medical aid will be sought. The parent/guardian will be notified as soon as possible of any emergency. If expenses for medical services are incurred, it is the member's parent/guardian's responsibility to pay for all medical costs. Please notify the Club of any phone number or address change so emergency contacts can be reached.

Damage to Club Property

If a Club member intentionally damages Club property, or does so through the negligence of Club rules or policies, it would be reasonable to expect the parents/guardians to pay for the damaged property. Loss of Club privileges for the member in question may be used as a means to motivate the parents/guardians to make payment. At the Club Director's discretion, a payment plan can be established with the family to allow them time to secure the necessary funds.

Medicine Policy

We prefer not to be involved in the dispensing of medications. However, we understand certain medications like inhalers and epi-pens must be administered in a timely manner and our involvement improves the safety of our members. When pills must be administered and it isn't possible for a parent/guardian to do so, our Clubs may assist, as long as certain guidelines are followed. Please ask your Club Director about the possibility of dispensing medication.

First Aid / CPR Training

All staff working directly with Club members are required to become certified in First Aid and CPR within the first 90 days of employment. Training is done internally, with Director of Training & Development being responsible for training and ensuring compliance with recertification.

Concussion Protocol

The organization has written concussion protocol members are put through anytime there is a head injury, no matter how minor. There are also written guidelines that are shared with parents so they know what symptom to look for at home.

Non-Smoking & Drug Free Environment

All facilities, properties, grounds and events are non-smoking and drug free. Alcohol, non-prescription drugs and any other substances are strictly prohibited. Everyone is expected to report any smoking or drug use to staff immediately.

Any parent appearing to be impaired will not be permitted to leave the building with their child. Another authorized parent/guardian will be contacted to pick up the child from the Club. Failure to cooperate will result in the police being called.

It is our stance that no member will be released from the Club with an adult who appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. It should be suggested that someone else retrieve the child as well as the impaired adult. Should the person in question refuse to cooperate, the authorities should be contacted.

Telephone Use

A phone is always available for members to call a parent/guardian. Members must get permission before using the phone. Parents may also call the Club to check on or relay important information to their child.

Photo Release

Images of our Club members engaged in programs let volunteers, donors and parents know the great things that happen within our Clubs. Images also let us share the accomplishments of your child(ren). For this reason, we frequently use photographs and/or video of our members participating in Club programs. This might include newspapers, annual reports, the Club's website, and social media sites representing the Clubs. However, the image use of your child(ren) is a very personal decision. If you do NOT want your child's name or image used for these purposes, you may indicate so on the Membership Form.

Out of Club Contact

While we maintain on-going policies of carefully screening both volunteers and paid staff, it is in the best interest of all concerned that all contact between staff and members be on a professional basis in the context of Club programming. Therefore, we specifically prohibit the establishment of personal, out-of-Club relationships between staff and members. This includes written correspondence and social media. Pre-existing relationships (like friends of the family) must be documented and signed by those parties involved.

Field Trips

The Club periodically provides supervised transportation to and from scheduled activities and field trips. We own buses and mini buses for the purpose of transporting members, and all drivers are properly licensed and trained. No member will be taken off Club property on a field trip without a permission slip on file for that specific trip.

Personal Belongings

Any personal belongings brought to the Club should be labeled clearly. Anything lost or stolen is not the responsibility of the Club. Members must take all projects and personal belongings home with them each day. Each Club maintains a Lost and Found for a period of time, which is emptied and donated to local charities periodically. All valuables are discouraged.

Members' jackets and backpacks must be placed in the designated areas.

Rentals

Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Northwest Indiana Club's facilities are available for rental during non-operating hours. Most areas of the Club are available, and we offer packages that combine different areas. Rates are very reasonable, and we ask that you contact the Club or visit our website for additional information.

Visit bgcgreaternwi.org/clubrentals for more information.

Volunteer Opportunities

We offer many volunteer opportunities throughout the year, including athletic league coaching and tutoring Club members during the school year. Please ask your Club about the opportunity to help us make a difference in our members' lives. For the safety of our members, a background check is completed on ALL volunteers.

Survey & Questionnaires

Periodically, members are asked for their feedback by participating in surveys and questionnaires regarding their Club experience, behaviors, skills, attitudes and beliefs. This information is used to let us know how we are doing, how we can improve our services, how we are making an impact and for grant reporting purposes. Information gathered from these measures is reported confidentially and collectively. Please notify your Club Director if you do not want your child to participate.

Contact Information

Administrative Offices

3691 Willowcreek Road
Suite 200
Portage, IN
219.764.CLUB

Cedar Lake Club

13000 Fairbanks
Cedar Lake, IN
219.374.5306

Duneland Club

521 W. 1100 N.
Chesterton, IN
219.926.9770

East Chicago Club

2009 E. 138th St.
East Chicago, IN
219.398.9820

Hammond Club

5840 Calumet Ave.
Hammond, IN
219.933.9820

John Will Anderson Gary Club

2700 W. 19th Ave.
Gary, IN
219.885.5501

Kidstop

354 W. Jefferson St.
Valparaiso, IN
219.462.2182

Lake Station Club

3350 Indiana St.
Hobart, IN
219.963.9200

Merrillville Club

Dean & Barbara White
Community Center
219.980.0030

Portage Club

5895 Evergreen
Portage, IN
219.762.4613

South Haven Club

723 Long Run Road
Valparaiso, IN
219.759.2565

Valparaiso Club

708 Evans Ave.
Valparaiso, IN
219.462.2182



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