YOUTH FORCE PROGRAM
PARENT HANDBOOK

HDC YOUTH FORCE PROGRAM AT J. RICKARDS MS

JAMES RICKARDS MIDDLE SCHOOL
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HDC YOUTH FORCE PROGRAM

The Youth Force Program is committed to providing quality services for your youth with opportunities to promote positive youth development. Positive youth development promotes healthy development through supportive relationships with adults and peers, community connections, meaningful opportunities for involvement, challenging and engaging activities and learning experiences, and physical and emotional safety. The Youth Force Program provides youth with culturally competent, holistic services designed to promote personal inspiration and enhance students' well-being in a supportive environment. It is important for you to know that safety is the number one priority for the Youth Force Program Staff. We hope that you will get to know us and consider us as a support system. It is what we make out of circumstances, and how we resolve our problems what makes us unique and special.

You will find out that the staff at The Youth Force Program cares about you, and is committed to helping you:

- A supportive and loving environment
- A safe daily summer program to learn and achieve goals
- Academic motivation (STEAM)
- Support services and connecting with community resources services
- Prevention program – life skills
- Teen Outreach Program (TOP Curriculum)
- Community Services Learning Projects
- Nutritional / Health & Fitness (CATCH Curriculum)
- Performance/ cultural Arts

- Social/Emotional Enrichment Activities
- Recreational Activities
- Snack & Supper

Eligibility

A youth must be middle school age and enrolled in Broward County Schools to attend the participating school in order to participate in The Youth Force Program After School and/or Summer Program.

Upon entering the program, all students begin a two-week trial period.

If the program cannot meet the student's needs, the student may be withdrawn.

Staff Statistics

All members of our experienced staff meet all HDC and BASCC qualifications. Each staff member has Bachelor and/or Master's in psychology, Criminal Justice, Mental Health, or related field. Criminal background checks along with reference checks are conducted every year. HDC staff members are drug tested prior to the start of employment and subjected to random drug screening throughout the school year.

Staff to Student Ratio

The HDC-YF Program strives to maintain a 1:25 ratio throughout program time. Youth are never left unsupervised.

Program Hours

The HDC -YIA Program operates Monday – Friday. The After-school program begins at 3:45pm until 6:00pm, also early release days. The summer Program begins at 8:30 am until 5:30 pm. Please consider Harmony staff time and ensure that you comply with dismissal time. Please note that if you are late picking up your youth more than three times without a valid reason it could lead to termination from the program and/or fees. As we are well aware that emergencies arise, please notify staff so that they can plan accordingly.

Sign In/Out Procedures

All youths registered in the HDC –YIA Program must be signed in and/or out daily. Youth must be dismissed from the school's designated single point of entry and must be signed out in the PDMS system. The youth, with written permission from the registering adult, may sign themselves out from the program at a specified time.

The summer Program begins at 8:30 am and youth must be accompanied by the designated sign in location. Students may not be signed up prior to 8:30 am. HDC will not have staff to supervise the youth; parents will assume their own

responsibility. During the summer Program, and prior to 5:30 pm, please proceed to the single point of entrance of the site or designated location to sign out your youth. After 5:30 pm, a staff member will greet you outside at a chosen location for curbside pickup. This allows you to stay in your car and sign out your youth while they are called to meet you in the car. No youth may leave the center without first being signed out by the parent. Prior written notice is required if any person other than those listed on the authorized release form should arrive to sign out your child.

A photo ID must be presented to pick up each student.

Parents/guardians must wait at the sign-out desk for students and directly supervise the students' exit from the site.

• Parents should not call ahead for their youth. For safety reasons, students cannot wait in the sign-out area for parents' arrivals.

The youth, with written permission from the registering adult, may sign themselves out from the program at a specified time.

Procedures for Students Not Picked Up by Program Closing Time

If a student has not been picked up by the program's closing time, the supervisor should attempt to contact the parent/guardian by telephone. • If the parent/guardian cannot be reached, the emergency contacts listed on the student's registration form should be called.

Procedures for Students Not Picked Up/One Hour After Closing Time

If neither parent(s)/guardian(s), or nor emergency contacts can be reached, and there has been no communication from parent(s)/guardian(s):

HDC supervisor will notify the SBBC Special Investigative Unit at 754-321-0725.

• If the student is taken into the custody of the police, the officer must sign the School Board Policy 1161, Supplement 23, School Board of Broward County Release Form.

The program must contact the program-based administrator:

• The police department will notify the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

Attendance Policy

To ensure the safety of all students, the afterschool program has attendance and sign-in/sign-out procedures in place. The youth are expected to attend the program on a daily basis in order to fully benefit from the services. Parents/guardians are responsible for notifying the supervisor if their child will be absent from the program after having attended school during the day.

If a youth attends less than three days per week, the program site supervisor shall schedule a meeting to discuss enrollment options. Should your youth be absent more than two days a phone call will be placed to the home and three days or more missed

could warrant a letter to parents and/or meeting. Excessive tardiness and absences from the program without a valid reason could result in termination from the program.

Roles & Responsibilities of the Parent

Parents and guardians are responsible for the following:

- Picking their youth up on time by 6:00pm
- Notifying the supervisor if their youth is going to be absent
- Keeping the supervisor informed of a change in emergency contact information
- Notifying the supervisor if their youth is going to be withdrawn from the program
- Notifying the supervisor of any change in their youth's health if it limits participation
- Signing the youth in and/or out of the program
- Treat HDC staff Program with respect and dignity
- Complete/Update the HDC registration form

Off Site Appointments / Activities

A "*Release of Liability*" form must be used if a parent/guardian makes a request for someone to pick up and return their youth during aftercare hours. For example: tutoring, doctor's appointment, and school activity/group not staffed by the HDC After school program.
If the registering adult wishes to allow their youth/youths to participate in an activity or club during afterschool hours that is not part of the afterschool program, a "Release of Liability" form.

•This form transfers the liability from the afterschool program to the adult supervising the youth in the alternative activity or club. Examples include:

- Girl Scouts/Boy Scouts
- School chorus/drama clubs/reading camp
- Sports/dance/gymnastics offered by school or an outside vendor
- Classroom teacher helpers, or any other activity where youths are supervised by adults who are not employed by the HDC program

•The authorized person removing the student from the afterschool program must sign the youth out. When the activity or club is over, the youth must be brought back to the afterschool program and signed back in by the authorized person

Additional Information

• For safety purposes, Parents/guardians must wait at the single point of entrance for youths and directly supervise the youth' exit from the school.
• Parents/guardians should not call ahead for their youth. For safety reasons, youths cannot wait in the sign-out area for parents'/guardians' arrivals.

Sick Youth

Parents are contacted immediately when their youth displays signs of illness. It is better to be overcautious than to risk exposing the rest of the youths and staff.
Youth must go home for:

- Earache (if they have not been on medication at least 24 hours)
- Fever over 98.6 degrees. Youths may return when they have been fever free for 24 hours
- Strep throat (if they have not been on medication at least 24 hours)
- Stomachache
- Anything contagious, i.e., chicken pox, hand, foot and mouth disease
- Diarrhea/vomiting
- Contagious rashes or rashes of unknown origin
- Head lice, including visible nits. Staff will check head upon return.
- Pink Eye (conjunctivitis) if they have not been on medication at least 24 hours
- Significant runny nose (discolored mucous)

Administration of Medication and Sunscreen

The HDC will not administer medications to a youth on a regular basis unless absolutely necessary and prescribed by a medical doctor. In this case, we ask that the procedures listed below are followed:

- Complete a Medication Authorization Form, advising the HDC staff of the amount and frequency of the dosage. The form can be obtained from the Program Coordinator.
- The medication must be in the original container with the pharmacist's label, marked with the prescription number, youth's name and physician's name. You can request from the pharmacist a second empty bottle with the same information so you can have a means of transporting your child's medication.
- At the end of the medication period, parents must take home any unused medication or give the HDC permission to properly dispose of it.

Allergies

Allergies to foods, chemicals, or other environmental issues (such as nuts, pollen, bee stings) must be listed in the "Allergies" section of the youth's registration form. Please include any reactions and treatments.

Youth Safety

Staff's primary role is to ensure youth safety and well-being. If at any time the youth feel threatened or unsafe, we encourage the youth to inform a staff member immediately, so that they can assist them in solving the problem.

In case of emergency, we encourage the youth to please remain calm, ask staff for assistance and follow the staff's instructions. In case the fire alarm goes off, leave the building walking, and follow emergency evacuation plan.

Every effort will be made to reach you or other contacts on the youth's registration form in the event of an emergency. If we are unable to reach any of the persons listed, we will take the necessary actions for the health and safety of your youth. Should there be any changes in the emergency contact numbers, please notify the Program Coordinator in writing so we may update your file. Youth experiencing minor injuries or illnesses such as bumps, bruises, scrapes, bee stings and stomach upsets will be treated by staff members who have received First Aid training, taking note of specifications on the youth's health form. Parents will be informed of all first aid administered. If the symptoms persist, parents will be asked to pick up the youth.

Emergency Procedures: In case of a major emergency (such as broken bones, puncture wounds, etc.) parents will be notified immediately and appropriate measures will be taken in order to care for the youth, including contacting emergency services if necessary.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

In order to ensure the well-being of all children in our care, our staff has a continuing duty under state law to report incidents of possible neglect or abuse, including physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, to the Department of Children and Families and to cooperate in any investigation of such possible neglect or abuse.

All staff members are mandatory reporters and must follow Florida statute for mandatory reporting. We may be subjected to criminal penalties if we fail to report such possible harm. Staff are not allowed to comment to parents, other staff, or any other persons on the subject of reported child abuse. Parents may not accuse or question staff concerning child abuse allegations. Child abuse investigations are a matter for DCF or local police departments.

Discipline Policy

The philosophy of our program is respect being shown to all. Praise and positive reinforcement are used to establish an environment of goodwill. Sometimes discipline is necessary in order to continue an effective program. While our staff are tolerant and understanding, disruptive behavior is addressed when necessary.

Should a problem arise, the youth is first counseled by the Site Leader in an effort to correct the problem. When counseling is unsuccessful, our secondary measure is time- out. Time-out is not considered a punishment, but rather a technique used to help calm the youth and help gain self-control.

If behavior does not improve after counseling and time-out, youth will be suspended for 2 days from the program, then the Site Leader will involve the Program Manager for a conference with the parents will be scheduled to discuss and sign a behavior contract. If a youth continues to exhibit unacceptable behavior, The HDC reserves the right to dismiss any child whose behavior is unacceptable.

We closely follow the Broward County Public Schools Code of Conduct policy book.

Policy for youth with Special Needs and Disabilities

The HDC Program makes every effort to accommodate all youths. If the safety of the youth, staff or other youth is in question, the HDC will discuss alternative options with the youth's parents.

Non-discrimination P o l i c y

The HDC Program does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

Items not allowed at the Program

Items not allowed during program time are:

- Jewelry
- Video games
- iPad to play games
- Money
- trading cards
- Weapons of any kinds, including knives and guns
- Substances abuse Drug

The HDC is not responsible for any lost, broken, or stolen items. If these items are brought to the program, they may be confiscated and returned to the parents at the end of the day.

Grievance Procedures

The HDC Program values all concerns voiced by program participants. Every effort is made to address each situation swiftly. Concerns regarding the Program should be addressed with the HDC Site Lead Succes Coach. If at that time you are unsatisfied with the outcome, please request a meeting with the HDC Program Manager Gloria Gonzalez at (954) 708 8516 – (954) 766 4483 – ggonzalez@harmonydc1.org.

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Confirmation Receipt of Parent Handbook

Thank you for trusting us. We are committed to providing quality services for your youth with opportunities to promote positive youth development. Please read the program handbook in order to familiarize yourself with our program. We count on your cooperation and involvement. Remember, without your participation we cannot expect the best results.

I acknowledge receipt of the HDC-YIA Program Handbook. I understand the procedures outlined in the handbook were developed to make certain the safety and wellbeing of all children and to make parents/guardians aware of important rules and policies.

_____ Date _____
PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME (print)

_____ Date _____
PARENT/GUARDIAN (Signature)

_____ Date _____
YOUTH Name (print)

_____ Date _____
YOUTH (Signature)

Youth Force Program
Youth In Action –After School and Summer Program
2025/2026 Behavior Contract

The following is a list of unacceptable behaviors and incidents that will not be tolerated in the Harmony D.C. YIA-Youth Force Program for the 2021/2022 After school and summer program. When a child exhibits and displays one or more of the following behaviors they will receive a consequence that suits the unacceptable behavior, which could range from a time-out, parent conference, suspension, loss of a field trip, or expulsion from the program. Because of safety and discipline concerns, it is important that you and your child understand how future incidents will be handled. We, _____ (child name) and _____ (parent name), hereby promise to follow ALL program rules. We understand that failure to do so will result in being disciplined in the following manner:

1. Non-compliance (not listening to staff, not following directions, continuous disruption) 10 minute time out, and if it is a continual will result in a parent conference. Refusal to serve time out and behavior is not corrected, parent will be notified and youth will be suspended for 1 day.
2. Not following rules (running inside the building, not asking permission, throwing objects, talking without permission, repeated off-task behaviors, etc) 10 minute time out, parent notification, and more than three times will result in a parent conference and 1 day suspension
3. Unsportsmanlike Behavior/Bullying (this includes taunting other youth, inappropriate gestures, yelling, making other youth feel bad, etc.) Youth will write paragraph regarding their behavior, 10 minute time-out and more than three times will result in a parent conference and 1 day suspension
4. Borrowing without permission (pencils, erasers, and other replaceable items: 10 minute time out, 3 repeated offences will result in a 1 day suspension.
5. Cursing/Swearing/Writing Profanity/Inappropriate and Derogatory Language: 10 minute time out and parent will be notified. 3 repeated offences will result in a 1 day suspension
6. Vandalism (which will include bathroom behavior where a child throws soap and/or excessive amounts of water on the floor, discards excessive amounts of toilet paper and/or paper towels on the floor, puts items in the toilet or urinal, writing on walls, writing on tables, defacing property) 1 day suspension and parent conference
7. Biting/Slapping/Pushing/Shoving/Kicking/Stabbing/Poking/Inappropriate Touching/Rough Horseplay: Parent Conference, 1 day suspension (1st occurrence) 5 day suspension (2nd occurrence). Youth must clear and process situation with counselor and other youth involved upon returning to the program.
8. Verbal Altercation: Separation from group, conference with staff, and then a mediation with other student. 1 day suspension.
9. Physical Altercation: Separation from group, conference with staff, and 5 day Suspension and Parent Conference
10. Stealing (with counselor proof): Apology letter, parent conference, and 5 day suspension.
11. Destroying Personal, school and/or Program Property (which will include books, toys, games, sports equipment, and vans, etc). 5 day suspension and Parent Conference.
12. Throwing food or not picking up after self will result in group clean-up.
13. Electronic Media: Inappropriate use of, and/or presence of inappropriate images and/or language/audio on electronic media.
14. **Expulsion from the Program: two events when child received 5 day suspensions or five events when child received 1 day suspension**

NOTES

- If a student receives a suspension from program, child will need to be picked up immediately by parents or authorized adult
- If a student is suspended from school campus, student will not be allow in after school program
- No outside food or drinks allow in program during after school, fieldtrips and summer camp.
- **Pick up from program: Parents will need to personally go to designated office location to complete sign out process. Students will not be allowed to leave campus unless accompanied by authorized parent/adult**
- Parent Conferences can be done over the phone.
- Attendance is expected at least 3 times a week to continue participation in program. Failure to do so, may result in expulsion from program. If attending extracurricular groups in campus, report to program first.

Child Signature: _____ Date:_____

Parent Signature: _____ Date:_____

Staff Signature: _____ Date:_____

*Note: These are general guidelines for the program. Any of these acts can result in immediate expulsion from the program, depending on the severity of the incident. Counselor and Supervisor will use discretion upon making any final decisions.