

YOUTH SPORTS PARENT HANDBOOK



YMCA OF METROPOLITAN DENVER

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YMCA YOUTH SPORTS

Who we are...

The YMCA of Metropolitan Denver has been serving the Denver area since 1875. Over the years the YMCA has expanded its service to include our youth sports program for both boys and girls. We look forward to serving you and your family. The YMCA strives to provide safe, affordable, convenient, and quality programs to meet your family's wants and needs.

Our Purpose...

The YMCA is an independent, not-for-profit association of members, volunteers, contributors and staff whose common goal is to provide quality programs which promote good health, strong families, youth development, enhance human and community growth and international understanding.

Our Mission...

The Mission of the YMCA of Metropolitan Denver is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

Our Vision...

The YMCA's vision is to enhance its role as Metropolitan Denver's leader in nurturing the healthy development of children and teens, the support of families, and the strengthening of communities.

Our Philosophy...

Our youth sports program is a values' and skills' based sports program designed for 3-17 year old boys and girls. Through the resources provided for our YMCA Sports Program coaches, players, parents and officials will be prepared to offer sports programs that emphasize fun, personal excellence and skills while deemphasizing winning at all costs and encouraging healthy competition.

YMCA Youth Sports Pledge

At the start of each game the coaches and players will recite the following sports pledge:

**I pledge to play the game, the best I can,
to be a team player, to respect my opponents,
the rules and officials,
and improve myself, in spirit, mind and body.**

Seven Pillars of YMCA Youth Super Sports

YMCA Youth Super Sports is not just another sports program. We have a mission, and that mission is stated in our Seven Pillars of YMCA Youth Super Sports.

- **Pillar One—Everyone Plays.** We do not use tryouts to select the best players nor do we cut kids from YMCA Youth Super Sports. During the season everyone receives equal practice time and plays at least half of every game. As part of a team, everyone contributes to the team's success.
- **Pillar Two—Safety First.** Although children get hurt playing sports, we do all we can to prevent injuries. We've modified each sport to make them age appropriate and more enjoyable to play.
- **Pillar Three—Fair Play.** Fair play is about playing by the rules and following the traditions of the game. It's about coaches being role models of good sporting behavior and guiding their players to do the same.
- **Pillar Four—Positive Competition.** We believe competition is a positive process when the pursuit of victory is kept in the right perspective. The right perspective is when adults make decisions that first are in the best interest of the athletes participating and then decisions that help win the contest.
- **Pillar Five—Family Involvement.** YMCA Youth Super Sports encourages parents to be appropriately involved in their child's participation in our sports programs. In addition to parents' helping as volunteer instructors, coaches, officials and timekeepers, we encourage their presence at practices and games to support their youngster's participation.
- **Pillar Six—Sport for All.** YMCA Youth Super Sports is an "inclusive" sport program. That means that youngsters who differ in various characteristics are to be included rather than excluded from participation.
- **Pillar Seven—Sport for Fun.** Sports are naturally fun for most kids. They love the challenge of mastering the skills of a game, playing with their friends and competing with their peers. Remember, YMCA sports are for the kids; let them have fun!

Helping Your Child Enjoy Sports

You can help your child enjoy sports by doing the following:

Developing a Winning Perspective

Every decision parents make in guiding their children should be based first on what's best for the child and second on what may help the child win. Stated another way, this perspective places **Athletes First, Winning Second**. We're not saying winning is unimportant. Winning—or striving to win—is essential to enjoyable competition. Pursuing victory and achieving goals are sweet rewards of sport participation. But they can turn sour if, through losing, you or your children lose the proper perspective also. An obsession with winning often produces a fear of failure, resulting in below average performances and upset children.

Building Your Child's Self-Esteem

Building self-esteem in your child is one of your most important parenting duties. It's not easy—and it's made even more difficult in sport by the prevailing attitude of "winning is everything." Athletes who find their self-worth through winning will go through tough times when they lose.

Building self-esteem in your child takes more than encouragement. You need to show your child unconditional approval and love. Don't praise dishonestly; children can see through that. If your child strikes out three times and makes an error in a softball game, don't tell her she played well. Just show the same amount of love and approval for her—not for her performance— that you showed before the game.

Emphasizing Fun, Skill Development, and Striving to Win

The reason you should emphasize fun is quite simple: without it, your child may not want to keep playing. Kids don't have fun when they stand around in practice or sit on the bench during games, when they feel pressure to win and don't improve or learn new skills. Conversely, they *do* have fun when practices are well organized, they get to play in games, they develop new skills, and the focus is on *striving* to win.

Helping Your Child Set Performance Goals

Performance goals—which emphasize individual skill improvement—are much better than the outcome goal of winning for two reasons:

1. Performance goals are in the athlete's control.
2. Performance goals help the athlete improve.

Performance goals should be specific, and they should be challenging but not too difficult to achieve. Help your child focus on performance goals before a game; this focus will help sport be an enjoyable learning experience for your son or daughter.

Parents' Responsibilities

All parents want their kids to do well and have fun in the activities they pursue. We want you to be actively involved in positive ways with your child's sport experiences in YMCA youth sports. To do that, you need to first understand your responsibilities as a parent of a child in YMCA youth sports:

1. Encourage your child to play sports, but don't pressure. Let your child choose to play—and to quit—if he or she wants.
2. Understand what your child wants from sports, and provide a supportive atmosphere for achieving these goals.
3. Set limits on your child's participation. Don't make sport everything in your child's life; make it a part of life.
4. Make sure the coach is qualified to guide your child through the sport experience.
5. Keep winning in perspective, and help your child do the same.
6. Help your child set challenging but realistic *performance* goals rather than focusing only on "winning the game."
7. Help your child understand the valuable lessons sport can teach.
8. Help your child meet responsibilities to the team and to the coach.
9. Turn your child over to the coach at practices and games—don't meddle or coach from the sidelines.
10. Supply the coach with information on any allergies or special health conditions your child has.

Character Development

Coaches and parents are strongly encouraged to work with the children in developing the four character values Caring, Honesty, Respect and Responsibility, by providing an environment in which these values are fostered. PARENTS AND COACHES ARE ALL ROLE MODELS and their behavior should reflect these values.

Caring – Being sensitive to the well being of others involved in the sports program

Honesty – To have integrity, making sure that one's actions match one's values through participation in sports.

Respect – To value the worth of every person, including oneself, one's teammates, opponents and officials

Responsible – To be accountable for one's behavior and obligations

Parent Behavior

Parents, participants, and spectators are expected to conduct themselves in a respectable, responsible, honest, and caring way. The YMCA has a no tolerance policy for behavior that is disrespectful, disruptive or rude. We will not hesitate to ask someone to leave the gym and/or facility for inappropriate behavior.

Each season coaches receive copies of Parents Code of Conduct forms that all parents are expected to sign before the start of the season. Please be responsible for your own behavior and set a good example for the kids.

Gym Supervisors and officials have the authority to ask any spectator or coach, who does not display conduct consistent with the YMCA philosophy, to leave the game area. This includes inappropriate comments to the officials, staff, or other participants.

Volunteer Coaches

All coaches are VOLUNTEERS who take time to instruct your child. Without their efforts, sports program would not be possible. Coaches are provided with drills and practice plans, but your knowledge and assistance is always welcome. The YMCA does our best to find knowledgeable, caring, responsible adults with the time and commitment level to provide the best experience for the team.

Background checks

All volunteers must fill out a complete volunteer application which includes a criminal background checks and reference checks. Applications can be found on our website or at any YMCA branch. If you know of a possible volunteer or would like to volunteer yourself please contact the YMCA.

What if there is no coach

The YMCA makes every effort to find coaches for teams. In the event that a coach can not be found for a team by the first scheduled practice, a staff member will run the first practice with the parents. If a coach is not found at this time or parents are not willing to work together to coach the team, the team will be disbanded and full refunds given.

Concerns with coaches

If during the season you begin to have concerns regarding your coach, please do not hesitate to call the YMCA to let us know. We do appreciate your feedback on coaches and will use your feedback to help coaches create the best experience possible for all participants.

General League Information

Registration

Registrations can be taken for youth sports by mail, fax, in person or online. Program offerings are listed in branch program guides and sports flyers, including age/grade restrictions, fees, parents & coaches meetings and registration deadlines

Registration Deadline

Deadlines for registration are listed in the program guide on the Youth Sports Calendar page and at the top of youth sports flyers. These deadlines are a month before the start of the season. After the deadline a \$20.00 late fee will be added to regular fees. The registration deadlines are important so that YMCA staff have enough time to prepare the league and hold coaches, parents and staff meetings before the start of the season.

Age/Grade Guidelines

Divisions are specified by the participant's grade level. For the summer season, divisions will be divided by the grade the child is going into in the fall. The Little Hoopsters, YMCA Kickers and Little Sluggers programs are designed specifically for 3 & 4 year olds only. Preschoolers who are 5 years of age must participate in the Kindergarten age group. Special consideration will be evaluated by the Athletic Director.

Registration Information

The personal information (phone numbers, email, etc.) on the registration form is used on the roster given to coaches and team members. We do not use information on file for membership for rosters, but only the information that is given to us on the registration form for the child each season. Rosters are only given out to team members and YMCA staff. Personal information is not shared with other outside parties.

Team Assignments

Teams are formed following the end of our registration periods. Teams are built by the following criteria: 1) Requests (coach, player or night), 2) school attending, or 3) Player ability level and gender (evening out all teams in division). Please write any player, coach or practice request on your registration form. The YMCA makes every effort to honor special requests. We understand the need to carpool and the desire to play with friends and former coaches. However no special requests are ever guaranteed.

Combining of YMCA Programs

If we do not get a sufficient number of teams at one YMCA to run a

league independently, the division will be combined with another YMCA. Travel may be necessary for games, but team practices will still be held at the YMCA or local school/city location.

Online Registration

You can register online at the YMCA of Metropolitan Denver's Website (www.denverymca.org). When registering for sports programs online there are two important keys to remember.

1. Make sure the child you are registering for the sports program is one of the persons listed under the account.
2. Before you select your sports program make sure you have the correct YMCA chosen as your branch.

Financial Information

Refunds

We want you to be completely satisfied with your youth sports experience. Therefore 100% refunds will be granted for all requests for refunds (for whatever reason) that are made before the start of the season.

Partial refunds for instances of hardship, such as injury, will be given once the season has started, based off of how many games the participant has already played in before the request for the refund was made. Please allow two weeks delivery for a refund check. Cash refunds are not available.

Credits

Credits on your YMCA account can be substituted for refunds on any request. This allows you to use money for a refunded program when registering for a future YMCA program.

Jersey Credits

If your child has participated in a YMCA Soccer, Jr. Nuggets, or Jr. Rockies program in a previous season and you do not want another jersey, you can receive a \$5.00 credit at the time of registration.

Jersey credits can **not** be done after registration.

*Our online registration system can not give discounts to program fees and therefore, returning players who register online and answer yes to the jersey question (meaning they already have a jersey), will receive a \$5.00 credit after the start of the season. To use credits built up on your account you have to come into a YMCA or sports program office to register.

Program Cancellations

The YMCA reserves the right to cancel programs due to insufficient registrations. In the case that a program is cancelled for this reason, all registered participants will be notified and given full refunds. 8

Financial Assistance

Financial assistance is available to those that qualify. Scholarship applications are available at the front desk of the YMCA and on our website. Please see the front desk or your athletic director to get more information on the required documentation. Only complete applications will be considered for assistance.

Scholarship applications need to be turned in before the registration deadline with a registration form for the child and sport you would like to register. Complete scholarship applications will be reviewed in a week. The parent will then be contacted on the amount of the scholarship and asked to make their payment at the YMCA to officially register their child for the sports program.

New scholarship applications must be filled out each calendar year. Participants on scholarship can only participate in one sport per season. Scholarships are limited. Scholarships are not guaranteed for each sports season, but dependent on the amount of need and scholarship dollars available.

Strong Kids Campaign

To ensure that no one is denied a chance to participate because of inability to pay, the YMCA has an annual Strong Kids Campaign to raise money to provide scholarships for swim lessons, day camp, family/senior memberships, youth sports, child care and community outreach programs.

You have the opportunity to become involved in our Strong Kids Campaign by making a donation, volunteering to help raise money for our community or by helping with special events during the campaign. Please speak to the executive director at your branch for more details.

Communication

Parents Meeting

At the beginning of each of the sports seasons there is a pre-scheduled parents meeting. This is the opportunity for the parents to learn about the YMCA Youth Sports program and also get important information for the start of the season. Important season dates, coach, practice and team information will all be distributed to parents at the meeting.

Communication with Staff

Each game site has a YMCA sports supervisor in charge of the events at that location. Any emergencies or concerns should be brought to the attention of this staff person. If you feel your concern has not been met or addressed by the YMCA staff person on site, please contact your YMCA Athletic Director. Each YMCA has an Athletic Director who oversees all sport programs, which may include many 9

offsite facilities. Please ask your program site supervisor for the contact information for your athletic director, visit our website or pick up a business card at the front desk of the YMCA facility.

Working with Officials

Youth Sports officials are usually parents, other coaches, high school or college students. Most of these people are learning how to officiate through practical experience. Officials do receive training from the YMCA but they improve as officials by officiating! Coaches and parents should try to be sympathetic rather than critical of the official's role. We want to maintain a positive playing environment and cutting down officials on the court is not positive.

Keep in mind that the officials work for the YMCA and are not obligated to discuss their job with coaches, parent or spectators after each game. If you have feedback about officials please direct it to the athletic director.

Email

Your email is the best way for the YMCA to communicate league information to you. If you provide us with your email address we will send you team information before the season, picture information and other season information. If your email is not on the team roster then we were not provided with it on your registration form.

Website

The following information can be found on our website (www.denverymca.org):

- Online registration
- Athletic Director and Sports Coordinator's contact information
- Season dates and program offerings
- Game Schedules
- Volunteer Applications
- Financial Assistance Applications
- Rules for each sport
- Parent & coaches code of conduct forms
- Weather cancellations and updates
- *And much, much more!*

Evaluation of Programs

Evaluations will be done online each season through the Zoomerang evaluation tool. All participants, who provided their correct email address, will be emailed the link to take the online evaluation. Surveys will be open for feedback until the end of the season. Evaluation questions are written by YMCA sports staff and may vary from season to season.

Result from the surveys will be compiled and reviewed by appropriate YMCA staff at the end of the season. Determination of major division changes will be made by the athletic director and/or if necessary by the whole sports core group of directors.

Facility Use Guidelines

Without the assistance and cooperation of city and school, gyms and fields our YMCA sports programs would not be possible. Each facility needs to be treated with the utmost respect. Specific rules for each facility are given to coaches with their practice permit. If guidelines are not followed gyms and fields can be lost therefore reducing the size and quality of our programs. Please review the general guidelines below and contact the YMCA if you have any questions about the facility that your team is using.

1. Teams are only allowed in the gym or on the field during their scheduled practice time. Please arrive and exit practice and game sites on time.
2. Parents must check in with the coach at each practice and game, do not just drop your kids off! Parents are encouraged to stay for practice and get involved.
3. If a player's siblings are present during practice or games an adult must accompany them. Please do not let your children run around, they must stay under your **direct supervision**.
4. No one is allowed outside the gym except to use the restrooms or to exit the building. An adult must accompany any children needing to use the restrooms. Do not allow children to play in the hallways, classrooms or outside of the building.
5. **No food or drink is allowed in the gyms or turf fields (Duncan YMCA only)**. Water in non-breakable containers is acceptable. Teams having snacks after games need to find an appropriate place as designated by the YMCA.
6. No alcohol or tobacco may be used on YMCA or school property.
7. Any damage to site property will not be tolerated. Facilities need to be treated with respect.
8. Please make sure to pick up any trash and leave your practice location better than when you started. Any baskets or equipment in the gym that was moved needs to be moved back when practice is complete.
9. For practices at school gyms, enter only through the designated after hours entrance. You may not enter the facility any time earlier than your scheduled practice time. Do not pound on the doors to get them unlocked. If a practice is scheduled at a school then the designated door will be unlocked by the school's night supervisor at the time practice is to begin.
10. Fields with frost or puddles of water should not be played on. At any time when play in weather conditions is damaging the field, practices should be discontinued.

Thank you for your cooperation in abiding by these rules. Any person, group, or team breaking these guidelines, resulting in the loss of a facility, as determined by the YMCA Supervisor or School representative, will be removed from the league without refund.

Equipment & Uniforms

Basic equipment for most sports will be checked out to coaches for the season. If you bring your own equipment to practices or games please make sure it is clearly marked with your name and phone number. Below is the information on basic equipment participants need for each sport offered by the YMCA.

Basketball – Each player needs to have non-marking tennis shoes and shorts or pants. Jr. Nugget’s jerseys will be given to coaches to distribute to their players.

Baseball - Each player needs to have their own baseball glove, tennis shoes or rubber cleats (no metal) and shorts or pants. Other equipment as well as Jr. Rockies hats and jerseys will be given to coaches to distribute to their players.

Roller Hockey - Each child must have a helmet preferably with a full-face cage, elbow pads, wrist guards or hockey gloves, knee pads, in line skates and a hockey stick. Also recommended but not required are shin guards. The YMCA will provide players with shirts.

Soccer - Each player needs to have shin guards, tennis shoes or rubber cleats (no metal) and shorts or pants. Other equipment as well as YMCA reversible jerseys will be given to coaches to distribute to their players.

Volleyball - Each player needs to have non-marking tennis shoes and shorts or pants. Knee pads are recommended but not mandatory. The YMCA will provide shirts for games and volleyballs for coaches to use during practice.

Lacrosse - All kids will need tennis shoes or rubber cleats (no metal) and shorts or pants. Mouth guards are recommended. The YMCA will provide shirts and all other equipment.

Flag Football - Each player needs to have tennis shoes or rubber cleats (no metal) and shorts or pants. Mouth guards are recommended. Other equipment as well as team shirts will be given to coaches to distribute to their players.

Lost & Found

The YMCA is not responsible for lost or stolen property. Items that are found, are kept at the YMCA facility were they are turned in. Unclaimed articles are given to charity.

Items left behind during games at non-YMCA locations are collected by YMCA staff and brought back to the branch. However, not all items are always found by staff so it is important to also contact the facility were the item was left. They may have found the item and put it into their lost and found. Participants would also have to contact the facility when items are left at practice sites.

Medals & Trophies

Included in the registration fees each season is either a medal or trophy for all participants. These will be distributed to coaches for their team at the end of the season.

Strategies to Prevent Child Abuse

1. The YMCA has in place a comprehensive pre-employment screening procedure to screen out staff and volunteers not suited for working with children. All of our volunteers go through a criminal background check.
2. The YMCA will take any allegation or suspicion of child abuse seriously.
3. Staff and Volunteers understand their legal obligation to report suspected abuse.
4. Staff and Volunteers understand what practices may be considered abusive and the difference between what may be considered appropriate and inappropriate touch.
5. Staff and Volunteers protect themselves and the YMCA by agreeing not to be alone with YMCA youth or program participants outside of YMCA programs or facilities (i.e.: babysitting, take children on trips, etc.) Players may not go to coaches homes, unless their parents are with them.
6. Coaches should monitor the release of participants on their teams to ensure a child is never left alone or picked up by a stranger.
7. Profanity, inappropriate jokes and any other type of harassment by persons participating in or attending YMCA programs is prohibited.
8. Coaches are trained to use positive techniques of guidance including positive reinforcement and encouragement rather than competition, comparison, and criticism.

Staff Qualifications

The quality and effectiveness of the YMCA sports programs are directly related to the skills and personal characteristics of the staff. Recruiting, selecting, training and supporting staff are essential to building the integrity of our programs. The staff is required to have recreational/sports related experience, knowledge of recreational activities and must possess certain qualities in order to serve as a role model for the participants.

Staff is trained in their specific duties as YMCA sports officials or supervisors. YMCA staff is Blood borne, Hazmat, 1st aid and CPR certified and trained in emergency procedures. Background checks are conducted on all staff.

Accidents and Emergencies

Basic first aid kits are available at each program site. Emergency numbers from rosters are available at each program site and coaches should always have a roster on hand at practices.

Player Injuries: If a parent or guardian of an injured child is not present when the injury takes place, the child's coach or YMCA staff person will contact a parent to notify them of the incident that occurred. Staff and coaches are instructed that when they do not feel comfortable handling a medical situation to immediately call the proper authorities. Parents will be notified of the injury and course of action as soon as possible.

We encourage parents to stay at team practices and games to be there for your child in case of an emergency. It is also vital that parents keep staff updated with current contact information.

Restrictive Problems: If your child has special needs or a medical issue that may effect their participation in the program please inform your coach. If special accommodations need to be made please contact the league director.

Bad Weather: In the case of bad weather on a practice night, it is up to the coach to determine if practice should take place or not and to contact their team in the event of a cancellation. The YMCA will not reschedule missed practices.

Unless extreme conditions exist, games may not be called until the game time. Minor weather conditions may result in games being postponed. As soon as cancellations are made coaches will be contacted and asked to contact their team. Information will also be posted on the YMCA website. Every effort will be made by the YMCA to make-up cancelled games.

Lightning: It is recommended that activities be stopped and all people moved inside to a safe location when either of the following occurs:

1. Cloud to ground lightning is observed and less than 30 seconds pass from seeing the lightning and hearing the thunder from the flash
2. In cloud lightning is occurring directly overhead

The outdoor activities can be considered safe to continue 30 minutes after the last lightning is seen. It is the responsibility of the YMCA staff person on site to determine when play should be stopped and when play should resume.

Tornado Warning: In the event of a tornado warning practices and games should be discontinued. Return to the building or seek shelter nearby. Practices and games may only continue when the warning has ended and no dangerous weather conditions are present.

THANK YOU for participating in YMCA Youth Sports Programs

