



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF THE AUSTIN AREA

2021 Home Club Member Handbook

Our Mission

The Boys & Girls Club seeks to “inspire and enable all young people, especially those that need us the most, to realize their full potential as productive, responsible and caring citizens.”

Core Beliefs

Boys & Girls Clubs provide youth with...

- ❑ A safe place to learn & grow
- ❑ Ongoing relationships with caring, adult professionals
- ❑ Life-enhancing programs
- ❑ Character development experiences
- ❑ Hope & opportunity

Programming

The Boys & Girls Club of the Austin Area expects to be the best youth development organization in Austin. Our staff are trained youth development professionals who are hired for their engaging, energetic and enthusiastic skills. Programs at the Boys & Girls Club Fall under Five Core Area Components - Character & Leadership Development, Educational & Career Development, Health & Life Skills, The Arts, Sports/Fitness & Recreation and STEM.

Membership

Membership is open to all youth attending the school. A membership form must be completed and signed by a parent or guardian each calendar year (even if you are simply renewing your membership). If the club charges a fee for weekly attendance, please adhere to the expectations set forth in the payment policy information document. The information you provide on the membership application is critical. We ask that every effort be made to present contact information that is both current as well as accurate. It is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to notify us of any changes to your telephone number (home, work, emergency contacts, etc.) and/or address information as soon as such changes occur.

Membership in the Boys & Girls Club is a privilege, not a right. The Boys & Girls Club reserves the right to refuse membership to any child at any time, with or without cause.

Membership Card

Members should bring their card to the club EVERY DAY. Club members are required to sign in each day upon entering the Club. Remember that membership in The Club is a privilege, not a right.

Club Hours & Non-School Days

Please refer to your club location for exact hours.

The Club reserves the right to change its hours and days of operation based on need and/or economic circumstances. If such changes occur, parents/guardians will be notified as soon as possible.

Additionally, there may be days when it is necessary to close the Club due to unforeseen circumstances such as emergency repairs, inclement weather, or anytime the local school district, including public charter schools, closes or suspends after-school programming for any specified period of time. Again, when such instances arise, we will make every effort to post the closing information as soon as possible to mitigate any inconvenience this may cause.

Pick up

Please be sure to pick up your child by the posted closing times. The Boys & Girls Club reserves the right to contact the appropriate authorities for assistance when members are not picked up by a reasonable time AND after all emergency contact alternatives have been exhausted.

Come & Go Facility

The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Austin Area are a **limited COME & GO FACILITY for school-based sites**. This policy allows members to come to our school-based program directly after school and/or after a school-sponsored program (i.e. tutoring). Once the member leaves the school campus, they are not permitted to return to the Club until the next school day. Members are NOT required to sign out; and staff members, under normal circumstances, are not allowed to prohibit a member from leaving the facility per the regulations of the Texas Department of Protective & Regulatory Services governing facilities/programs exempt from licensure as a childcare facility. Thus, it is the responsibility of the child AND the parent/guardian to determine, understand and enforce whatever arrival and departure methods they see fit. Please note that youth are not allowed on the Club's grounds during operating hours unless they are signed in and participating in Club activities. Members should NOT be dropped off prior to the opening of any facility, as the Club cannot be held responsible for the supervision of such youth.

It is important to remember that the Boys & Girls Club is NOT A DAYCARE and is not governed by licensure as a childcare facility.

Supervision

Our staff are trained Youth Development Professionals. Trained volunteers often support our staff. A staff member and/or trained volunteer will oversee each of our designated program areas. Please ALWAYS take the time to remind your child of the need to follow Club rules and directions whether said directions are given by a staff member or a volunteer. Boys & Girls Clubs of the Austin Area operates at a 1:20 Adult to Youth ratio.

Phone Calls

Our phones are for Club business only. Members should use phones or receive calls in emergencies only. Our lines need to remain open in the event of an emergency. Please make any necessary arrangements before your child comes to the Club so that you do not have to call the Club and your child does not have to call you. If a child is using a personal cell phone during club time and it becomes a distraction to their club time, a staff member may confiscate the phone if necessary.

Dress Code

Youth should dress comfortably and wear clothes that allow them to participate in typical Boys & Girls Club activities and programs. We will expect the following...

Footwear: Shoes and socks must be worn at all times. Flip-flops, sandals and cleats are discouraged, as are any other open-toed shoes for safety reasons. Club members may not be allowed to participate in certain activities if open-toed shoes are worn. The best advice is to wear tennis/walking shoes every day.

Clothing: Inappropriate clothing of any kind is NOT allowed in the Club. Members wearing clothes that are too short, too tight or too revealing in any way or clothes with questionable or distasteful advertising will be asked to change or leave immediately. This judgment will be left solely to the discretion of the Club staff. If a uniform policy is enforced at the school-based site, it will be enforced at the school-based Club.

Personal Belongings

All personal belongings brought into the Club by a youth are the responsibility of that youth. The Boys & Girls Club is **NOT responsible** for lost, damaged or stolen items. Please discourage your child from bringing anything to the Club that is not completely necessary, especially money. Necessary items, such as backpacks and jackets should be clearly marked with the member's name. Items that are not collected from our lost-and-found in a timely fashion will be donated to a local charity.

Code of Conduct & Discipline Policy

One of the Club's core beliefs is to provide a safe place to learn and grow. Positive attitudes keep the Club fun. Below are some simple guidelines members are expected to follow...

- Respect yourself.
- Play fairly and be honest.
- Applaud the efforts of others.
- Avoid inappropriate language.
- Dress appropriately at all times.
- Running is reserved for athletics.
- Say only good things about others.
- Bring your membership card everyday.
- Be respectful of Boys & Girls Club staff.
- Resolve disagreements in a positive way.
- Listen during appropriate times and assemblies.
- Be respectful of other members and their property.
- Tobacco, drugs, alcohol and weapons are prohibited.
- Participate only in program areas open to your assigned group.
- Take care of your Boys & Girls Club facility, grounds, and equipment.

The Boys & Girls Club strives to keep the consequences for unacceptable behavior clear, appropriate and timely. The safety of all members is of utmost importance to us. Our standards, along with the expectation that all members use good common sense, exist to ensure that your child and every other child at the Club can safely enjoy the Club's activities. Any member who disrupts programs or creates a dangerous situation will be disciplined appropriately. Members who do not follow rules can expect to lose privileges and face consequences. First-time offenses are never excused as such and will be handled based on their severity. Parents will be called to remove any member who has failed to curb his or her disruptive behavior and/or is behaving in an aggressive or violent manor that creates a dangerous situation for themselves, fellow members, staff or visitors. When a member is suspended, it is his or her responsibility to let you (the parent/guardian) know. A phone call may be made to you if time allows. Please understand that it is very difficult for the staff to interrupt programming to call you and speak at great length about behavior that has already occurred and led to your child's suspension. We will, however, complete a written suspension report that we will give to the member or to you, should you pick up your child in person. In some cases, a suspension report will be mailed to you if the situation dictates such a need.

Consequences- 3 Strike Rule

1st Offense: Strike One

- Conversation w/ Student
- Verbal Warning after many redirections, written documentation started; parents notified
- Document in membership file for future use

2nd Offense: Strike Two

- Conversation w/ member
- Written documentation completed from file; copies made for membership file and parents
- Parents notified
- Suspension possible/ one day

3rd Offense: Strike Three

- Conversation w/member
- Documentation letter completed; copies made for membership file and parents
- Parents and school notified
- Member may be suspended for 3 or more days
- Continued misbehavior can lead to removal permanently

** Please note that any time a law is broken in or around the Boys & Girls Club or it is suspected that a Club member or guest has broken the law and fled to the Club to avoid the authorities, the police will be notified immediately. The Boys & Girls Club is NOT a haven or refuge for those committing illegal acts or fleeing the authorities.*

Members are expected to respond to discipline without incident. Failure to do so will almost always increase any action taken in time or severity. Staff members are trained and fully expected, by policy, to maintain full control of any situation that occurs in their program area and will NOT tolerate anything that threatens that control, in appearance and/or manner. Also, please understand that sometimes the story that gets home is not always complete or accurate. Children sometimes tend to explain an incident in a manner that will not implicate them, or casts blame their way. In addition, staff members, though well trained and experienced, are human, so please call the Club if you have any questions at all concerning disciplinary measures or any other Club activity. Your support and involvement as the parent/guardian is vital to our success as youth development professionals.

Bullying, Sexual Harassment, and Dating Abuse

The Club expects all members to respect the personal boundaries of others at all times. Appropriate and respectful behaviors promote cooperative interactions and a safe environment for all members. Abusive behavior, including bullying/ cyber bullying, harassment, dating abuse, digital abuse, and sexual violence will not be tolerated.

Bullying is defined as written, verbal, or physical conduct that is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive to create an intimidating, threatening, or abusive environment for a member.

Sexual harassment is defined as any unwelcome behavior of sexual nature that creates undesirable or uncomfortable feelings for its target. The Club considers harassment to include, but not limited to, unwanted touching or contact, gestures, taunting, sexual graffiti, dirty jokes, talking about experiences, advances, indecent exposure, rumors about a member's sexual identity or activity, request for favors, or comments about body parts.

Dating abuse includes physical, sexual, or emotional abuse and other disrespectful behaviors against a current or former dating partner.

A core belief of the Boys & Girls Club is to provide a safe place for all members and guests. The Club is committed to fully investigating any complaints of bullying, sexual harassment and dating abuse. Appropriate consequences can include suspension or expulsion and possibly even criminal charges. Members are encouraged to report any complaints directly to the Club Director.

Technology Use

Do not expect privacy: Appropriate Club staff reserve the right to inspect technology systems at any time to ensure their appropriate use and maintenance. Club members should not use Club technology equipment for anything they wouldn't want their family or staff to see. Respect Copyright: Club members should never download, install, or disseminate copyrighted software, shareware, or freeware unless given permission of appropriate Club Staff. Club members should not download, install, or disseminate pirated content, including but not limited to software, movies, or music. Unacceptable use: Club technology equipment may not be used to view or create inappropriate content such as pornography or content that discriminates against others. Club technology may also not be used to create any content that is harmful to others, uses inappropriate language, or constitutes bullying or harassment. Club members may not introduce viruses, others malware, or use Club technology equipment to send spam or attack the club or any other network. Generally, Club technology equipment may not be used for any illegal purpose.

Field Trips

The Boys & Girls Club provides a variety of opportunities for our members to participate in activities off Club property that support our core beliefs and programs. Each excursion requires a signed permission slip and any necessary fees prior to departing. Most sign-ups are taken on a first-come, first-served basis (meaning eligible members who return the required permission slip). Members and parents are reminded that all of our Club rules extend to field trips. Members who fail to follow our rules and general Club expectations for appropriate behavior will prompt an immediate call to a parent or guardian to remove that member from the field trip at their own cost. *A parent or guardian MUST always be available by telephone during any Club sponsored field trip in the event that the staff needs to contact you.*

Medications/ Medical Attention/ Injury

The Boys & Girls Club is NOT allowed, by policy, to dispense, store and/or oversee medication of any kind, including all non-prescription medications.

Accidents

The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Austin Area strive to maintain a safe and secure environment. There is an assumed risk in many of our core programs, including, but not limited to sports. Please feel safe in knowing that our trained staff are attentive to providing the safest environment possible. The completed membership application authorizes the Club staff to seek medical treatment for a member, if necessary, and that any associated costs for such care are the responsibility of the parent or guardian. ***The Boys & Girls Club does NOT provide medical insurance for members.*** In the event of a serious injury the staff will call 911 immediately and then call the parents/guardians or alternative emergency contacts. This is one more reason why updated contact information is your responsibility and crucial to your child's well being.

Infestation or Contagious Conditions

All suspected transferable infestations or transmittable contagious conditions will be addressed fully in the following manner and without exception...

1. Parents will be contacted for immediate removal of the member from Club facilities.
2. Proof of treatment from a health care facility is required before the child is allowed back in the Club.

Food

The Boys & Girls Club understands and appreciates the need for a healthy diet among all of our members. It is our goal to encourage healthy eating habits that promote the well being of our youth. All of our facilities try to provide a healthy, balanced dinner to all members. Please see your local club director for serving times of meals. A lunch program is usually provided during the summer (see staff for details). Each Club has a different policy regarding the provision of snacks. Additionally, each Club has a designated area for eating. Please keep food and drinks out of the areas where such items are prohibited (library, computer lab, gym, etc.).

Grievance, Concerns, or Feedback Please Contact Us

Please do not hesitate to speak to a staff member or Club / Extension Club Director whenever you have a question or a concern. We hope you will always start by contacting the staff or Club / Extension Club Director when issues arise; after all, they are the ones who know your children the best. If the need arises, however, and you feel that an issue or complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved at the Club-level, please know that parents/guardians may always contact the area manager (Director of Club Operations) to resolve the issue or concern at a higher level. After speaking with the DOCOS if you would like to speak with the Chief Program Services Officer of the organization at our administrative offices. Please contact our office at 512-444-7199. We have an open-door policy for any and all concerns and you can reach out to The Chief Executive Officer at any time.

Thanks for joining the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Austin Area – Great Futures Start Here!