



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®**  
**FOR HEALTHY LIVING**  
**FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

# **HOW WE PLAY THE GAME!**

**Youth Sports: Overview for Parents**  
**GATEWAY REGION YMCA**



# WELCOME PARENTS AND PARTICIPANTS!

Thank you for choosing the YMCA for your child's youth sports experience! Our goal is for all youth sports participants, both parents and children, to have an enjoyable experience.

Skill development is the main component of all YMCA Youth Sports. Each child will play an equal amount of time in every game as close as possible based on the team roster. A fun and friendly environment is characteristic of all YMCA programs.

Our program is made possible by the dedication of our volunteer coaches. They put in many hours of work to make the league a success, investing their time and energy into the lives of young people in our community. If you are interested in volunteer opportunities, please contact your YMCA youth sports director.

We hope you will take an active role in your child's experience this season. Please support your child by participating with him/her during the practices and games. Time spent with your child at home developing sports skills builds confidence and strengthens parent-child relationships. We look forward to serving you and your child in our youth sports program.

**Youth Sports Staff Team**  
**GATEWAY REGION YMCA**  
**[gwrymca.org](http://gwrymca.org)**

**The YMCA: We're for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.**



## **YMCA MISSION**

To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

All of our programs are centered around our mission and our four core values of character development: caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility. Your child will learn about these core values and how they apply to their lives on and off the field. We hope you will take time at home to reinforce the values and their importance.

## **OUR PHILOSOPHY**

Our philosophy for youth sports is simple: Everyone Plays, Everyone Wins. We ask that you make decisions based first on what is best for our young athletes and second on what may improve the athletes' or team's chances of winning. It does not mean that winning or striving to win is unimportant. We believe that winning should take a back seat to what is in the best interests of our young participants who are here to have fun and build their self-confidence.

## **OUR CORE VALUES**

### **Caring**

"A choice to care without conditions or limitations." Listen and treat all players equally.

### **Honesty**

"Truthfulness and genuineness with yourself and others." Make the right call, even when the cost is high.

### **Respect**

"Honor toward others; humility." Treat players, opponents, officials, and parents as you would wish to be treated. Put-downs, name calling, and yelling set a bad example.

### **Responsibility**

"Trustworthiness; the ability to be depended on." Know the important principles of the sport. Strive to improve your own performance as a coach, official, or spectator.



## **THE YMCA SEVEN PILLARS OF YOUTH SPORTS**

### **1: Everyone Plays**

We do not hold tryouts; nor do we cut kids from our teams. Everyone who registers is assigned to a team. During the season everyone receives equal practice time and plays at least half of every game.

### **2: Safety First**

Although some children may get hurt playing sports, we do all we can to prevent injuries. We've modified each sport to make it safer. We ask you to take time to check that the equipment and facilities are safe and only teach the sport as instructed by your coach, so that the skills taught are appropriate for each child's developmental level. Players should increase their fitness levels gradually so they are conditioned for the sport. We rely on parents to supervise their players and stop any unsafe activities.

### **3: Fair Play**

Fair play is about more than playing by the rules. It's about other players showing respect for everyone involved in youth sports. It's about being a role model of good sportsmanship and guiding your players to do the same. We're more interested in developing children's character through sports than in developing a few highly skilled players.

### **4: Positive Competition**

We believe competition is positive when the pursuit of victory is kept in the right perspective. Winning isn't everything. Learning to compete is important for children, and learning to cooperate in a competitive world is an essential life skill. The "right perspective" means adults make decisions that put the best interests of the children above winning the game. These are the lessons we want to teach through youth sports.

### **5: Family Involvement**

We encourage parents to be involved appropriately along with their child. In addition to parents being helpful as volunteer coaches, officials, and timekeepers, we encourage them to be at practices and games to support their child's participation.

### **6: Sports for All**

We strive to make this is an inclusive sports program. That means that children with different abilities and skill levels are included in participation. We ask our adult leaders to support and appreciate the diversity of children in our society and to encourage the children and other parents to do the same. We do not forfeit games; instead, we share players and proceed with planned games.

### **7: Sports for Fun**

Sports are naturally fun for most children. They love the challenge of mastering the skills of the game, playing with their friends, and competing with their peers. As parents, we all have a role to play in keeping the focus on having fun and providing a positive, supportive environment. The important thing is that everyone enjoys playing.

## **PROGRAM COMPONENTS**

### **Uniforms/Equipment**

Each player will receive their team jersey/shirt before the first game of the season. These will be handed out to the coaches, and it will be their responsibility to distribute these to each of their players. Athletic or sport-appropriate shoes and shorts and/or sweats should be worn in addition to the uniform shirt. Mouth guards and eye goggles may also be worn but are not mandatory.

**Baseball** – Players should bring a glove and water in spill-proof, non-breakable container. Optional equipment is their own bat, helmet, ball and cleats (no metal cleats.) K-2 players use a Level 1 RIF baseball. Grade 3-6 boys use a regulation baseball. Grade 3-6 girls use an 11-inch regulation softball.

**Soccer** - Players should bring water in spill-proof, non-breakable container. We recommend that they wear shin guards. Optional equipment is their own ball and cleats (no metal cleats.) K-2 players use a size 3 ball. Grades 3-6 use a size 4 ball.

**Flag Football** - Players should bring water in spill-proof, non-breakable container. We recommend that they wear mouth guards. Optional equipment is their own ball and cleats (no metal cleats.) Grades 1-3 use a pee wee ball. Grades 4-6 use a junior ball.

**Volleyball** - Players should bring water in spill-proof, non-breakable container. We recommend that they wear knee pads. Optional equipment is their own ball. Grades 3-6 use a Volley Lite. Grade 7-8 use a regulation ball.

**Basketball** - Players should bring water in spill-proof, non-breakable container. Optional equipment is their own ball. K-2 players use a 27.5-inch junior ball. Grade 3-4 boys use a 28.5-inch intermediate. Grade 3-8 girls use a 28.5-inch intermediate. Grade 5-8 Boys use a 29.5-inch official ball.

### **Team Formation**

We try to meet every player, coach and practice request when creating teams, however, that is not always possible. In cases where we are not able to meet a request, we will do our best to find a team that will be a good fit

### **Practices and Games**

Each team has one practice a week. These practices are determined on the coach's and player's availability and will meet at the predetermined location chosen by the YMCA. Games will be determined by the game schedule but are typically held on Saturday at the location determined by the game schedule you receive at the beginning of the season. Practice and game schedules are sent through Playerspace.

### **Game Locations**

Teams may have away games at other YMCA locations. We limit travel as much as possible and make it fair for all teams in the league. In order to create full leagues and allow all kids the opportunity to play, some travel may be required.

## **Coaches**

All coaches at the YMCA participate on a volunteer basis. They must complete volunteer training and are subject to a criminal background check. We do not take your children's safety lightly and take steps to ensure that our youth sports programs provide a safe environment. (If you are interested in learning more about becoming a coach for the YMCA, please let your YMCA youth sports director know! Coaches attend a pre-season coach's meeting where they receive information they need.) On the first day of practice, coaches are introduced to parents and players and they provide their contact information.

## **Instructional Sports**

Our leagues are instructional in nature to help children learn a new activity or build upon previous skills. The emphasis is on skill development and enjoyment.

## **Cancellations**

Sometimes it is necessary for practices/games to be canceled due to inclement weather. YMCA youth sports directors are responsible for making these decisions, and will do so in a timely fashion. PlayerSpace will be utilized also for text and emails to coaches and parents. We will make every effort to schedule make-up games but they are not guaranteed due to possible time and field constraints.

## **PlayerSpace.com Sports Website**

PlayerSpace is our league management system for youth sports. As a registered participant, you will have access to a personal account within PlayerSpace. Once your account is active, you will receive an email\* with your username and password as well as a link to access your PlayerSpace accounts. Playerspace benefits include:

### **Parent Functionality:**

- Access team game schedule and sync to personal calendar
- View updates posted by coach or other parents
- Message coach directly
- Post video and pictures of games

### **Coach Expectations:**

- Coaches will communicate with teams primarily through PlayerSpace email and text messaging
- Coaches will post updates about any practice changes (time, date, location) on PlayerSpace and send out notifications through the PlayerSpace communication system
- Coaches will monitor posts by team families and respond within a few days

### **Sports Director Communications**

- Email and text team alerts of game/practice cancellations due to weather
- Email and text team schedule changes.

\*Notifications from PlayerSpace will be sent to the email address that you provided at registration. Please add noreply@playerspace.com to your safe sender list to ensure that you receive all notifications. If you have concerns about the email address that you provided at registration, contact your YMCA youth sports director.

## **Youth Sports Cancellation Policy/Refunds**

We hope you do not have to cancel, but if you do, please know our policy:

- Cancellations made prior to the registration deadline will receive 100% refund
- Cancellations received after the registration deadline will be subject to a \$15 fee
- No refunds will be issued for cancellations after the second scheduled game

## **PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT**

We ask that you try your best to uphold this code, so that everyone can enjoy their experience. As a YMCA parent, we ask that you:

- Encourage good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, and officials at every game, practice, or event.
- Place the emotional and physical wellbeing of the players ahead of your personal desire to win.
- Demand a drug, alcohol, and tobacco free sports event and agree to assist by refraining from their use at all youth sports events.
- Ask your child to treat other players, coaches, fans, and officials with respect.
- Promise to help your child enjoy the youth sports experience by fostering good sportsmanship, assisting in coaching, being a respectful fan, and modeling that behavior for your child.
- Have your child participate in as many practices and games as possible while providing proper supervision for all of the children brought to practices and games.
- Attend practices and games to support your child's participation.
- Be a positive role model for your child and the other players on his/her team.
- Not use profanity or vulgar speech while observing your child's activities.
- Not coach your child, or other children, during games if you are not an official coach.
- Keep off of the playing field at all times, unless specifically told otherwise by an official or coach.
- Refrain from bringing a dog or other animal to practices or games. Pets are not allowed at many locations.
- Resolve conflicts without regressing to hostility or violence.
- Not encourage any behavior that could be dangerous to your child or the other children.
- Not taunt, heckle, argue with, any coach, official, or opposing player during the course of your child's games/practices.

Failure to comply with this code of conduct may result in your losing privilege of attending YMCA Youth Sports events.

**Thank you for choosing YMCA Youth Sports!**

If you have questions, please contact the YMCA youth sports director at your Y.

**[www.gwrymca.org](http://www.gwrymca.org)**