



## **WESTERN YOUTH NETWORK (WYN) PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK**

Welcome to the Western Youth Network!

Raising a Community

Welcome to Western Youth Network (WYN). We are so happy that you have decided to become part of our family! WYN was established in 1985 to address the gaps in service for youth and families in Watauga County. WYN primarily serves youth in the High Country with an array of programs and services, including After School, Mentoring, and Prevention Programs.

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## Philosophy

At WYN, our mission is to transform our High Country community by nurturing and empowering our children so that they live healthy, engaged, and fulfilled lives. Our vision is to transform our community and make the brightest futures possible for our youth.

To meet these goals, we use a combination of relationship-driven techniques and tools to help engage students in our programs. WYN staff are trained in Love and Logic curriculum. This curriculum is a trusted method for developing responsibility, self-control, and good decision making skills in individuals. We use this in tandem with Motivational Interviewing and Reconnect For Resilience skills that allow students to have support and care while they process mistakes, try new ways of approaching situations, and pushing themselves out of their comfort zones.

We believe that with a combination of support, safety, and skill building, students will build resilience and hone interpersonal skills that will last a lifetime.

## Operating Hours and Contact Information

**WYN's Afterschool:** 12:00am-6:00pm, Monday-Friday

**WYN's Summer Camp:** 8:00am-5:30pm, Monday-Thursday (only during weeks Summer Camp is operating)

**WYN Administration Office:** 9:00am-5:00pm, Monday-Friday

**Watauga Afterschool and Summer Camp Phone:** 828-773-2566

**WYN's Administration Office:** 828-264-5174

### After School

WYN provides the only community-based After School Program for middle school students in Watauga County. Highly skilled staff and trained volunteers provide homework assistance, skill building, recreation and community service opportunities in a safe, supportive environment. WYN focuses on fun and accountability during the critical after school hours. Involvement in WYN's After School Program has been shown to improve behaviors, self-esteem, academic success, and interpersonal relationships

Watauga After School operates Monday-Friday from 2:30-6 pm. at 134 Doctors Boone, NC 28607

WYN's Ashe After School operates Monday-Friday from 2:30pm– 6pm at Family Central

WYN's Sparta/Piney After School operates Monday-Friday from 2:30pm– 6pm at Sparta School

WYN's Glade Creek After School operates Monday-Friday from 2:30pm– 6pm at Glade Creek

WYN After School does not operate on days that County Schools do not operate, unless otherwise specified by staff. WYN After School will operate on County Teacher Workdays and Professional Development Days on a case-by-case basis. WYN After School will operate on County Schools half days on a case-by-case basis.

WYN follows County Schools' operating schedule for inclement weather. In the event of an early dismissal from school due to weather, WYN After School will also be closed.

### ***Program Scheduling***

Parents and volunteers will be notified of schedule changes through emails and flyers (at least a week before the schedule change and flyers put beside the sign out) and through verbal reminders the day before the schedule change. These schedule changes will be documented in the student's Daily Contact Record (notes) and attendance spreadsheet.

Schools will be notified through calls two days before the schedule change.

### ***Summer Program***

WYN provides a six-week Summer Program for rising 6th-rising 9th grade students in Watauga County, rising 1st- rising 7th grade in Ashe County, and rising 1st-rising 9th grade in Alleghany County. We use outdoor adventure, experiential education, and team building to strengthen self-awareness, leadership, and social skills. Through the Project Venture Program, WYN is also able to push students out of their comfort zones and offer adventure trips during the summer time. We operate Monday-Thursday for 3 weeks in June and 3 weeks in July.

### ***Mentoring***

WYN's mentoring initiative matches 6-17 year-old youth with compassionate adults who serve as positive role models in Watauga and Avery counties. To participate in this program, family members, teachers, the court system, law enforcement, and others may refer youth. Activities can include one-on-one relationship building, trips to baseball games together, bowling, having lunch with youth at school, sports, shopping, group monthly activities, and just hanging out. All of our mentors must be a minimum of 18 years old and attend training before they can be matched with a child. All mentors must pass criminal background checks.

Please contact our Mentoring Director, Angela McMann, at our Administration Office for more information or to refer a child to this program.

### ***Community Health***

The goals of WYN's Community Health programming are to build strong personal commitments, improve school performance, decrease drug involvement and decrease emotional distress. WYN Community Health Specialists partner with community sectors, utilizing evidence-based approaches to prevent and reduce youth substance abuse through awareness, advocacy, and action. Through formal partnerships with law enforcement, mental health practitioners, schools, universities, community colleges, hospitals, health departments, and various other agencies, WYN aids communities in the selection, implementation, and evaluation of effective, culturally appropriate, and sustainable prevention activities. Together, community sectors implement interventions that reduce access and availability of alcohol and drugs, change community norms around alcohol and drug use, and reinforce the importance of policies and practices to prevent high risk alcohol and drug behaviors. These data-driven strategies are part of a comprehensive plan that targets youth and adults, while also positively impacting the shared community environment in which we live. We aim to create strategies that empower youth to make healthy decisions; as well as create family, school and community environments that promote and support healthy decision making by youth within the 5 county service region of Ashe, Avery, Alleghany, Watauga, and Wilkes.

Please contact our Community Health Director, Amber Dixon, at our Administration Office for more information or to refer a child to this program.

## Activities and Schedules

As students get older, they appreciate the autonomy they are given at our Afterschool Program. We do our best to balance their need for independence with enrichment activities, meaningful programming, and academic time. Our programming week includes:

**Free Time**—Students are given access to sports equipment, art supplies, books, skateboards, games, etc. during their free time at WYN. Staff find balance in participating in activities with students during this time and allowing students to play on their own in peer groups.

**Health Club (Watuaga)**—Health Club is held every Monday at WYN. This is a time for students to learn and practice resilience skills, learn about their changing brain, ask questions about all things Health, try new foods, experience new ways to incorporate body movement, and more!

**Team building**—Every Wednesday there will be a large-group team building game. These games encourage students to interact with one another; break up peer groups; practice interpersonal skills like communication, conflict resolution, etc.; and try something new. It is always usually a more movement-filled day.

**Clubs**—Every Friday we host Clubs for students. Our long-standing Cooking Club is a weekly feature, while other clubs may include board game club, karaoke club, walking club, etc. These change year-to-year due to our encouragement for students to come up with new club ideas as their interests grow and change.

**Homework**—Students are given 30-60 minutes each afternoon Monday-Thursday to complete homework. Students themselves are responsible for knowing how to do their homework and to bring aids to help complete homework, but as staff, we do our best to help students complete homework correctly.

If students do not have homework they are asked to read for 20 minutes. If students complete their homework early, they are asked to read for 10 minutes. Once one of these conditions has been met, students may play educational games on their computers

## Additional Programming

WYN attempts to host Saturday or “After After School” trips at least once a month in Watauga.. These trips consist of fun activities such as attending ASU athletic games, going to the movies, going bowling, etc. Students must have additional waivers signed for every “additional programming” activity they attend.

WYN offers an annual beach trip for qualifying students during Watauga and Ashe County’s Spring Break. Students stay in a beach house and practice housekeeping, meal planning, cooking, and overall getting the experience of living with others. Students typically take a trip to a local aquarium for an educational experience. We fill the week with trips to the beach, games, and giggles. Students must apply for their spot on this trip. Academics, behavior, attendance, and attitude are all factored into this decision. Applications go out every February.

Alleghany County has a day camp style Spring Break.

## STANDARDS FOR GETTING ALONG

WYN embraces and invites diversity. WYN encourages its staff and youth to appropriately express and celebrate all types of people in an attempt to foster a community of acceptance and support. In accordance with this value, the following behaviors and/or personal conduct are expected from the youth we serve:

- Contribute to an environment that is comfortable and safe for everyone
- Be respectful
- Follow WCS dress code
- No vulgar or profane language
- No physical or verbal aggressiveness towards self or others
- No weapons, tobacco products, alcohol, or any other illegal substances.

## CHILD/YOUTH RIGHTS

At WYN, we value what makes you unique, in fact, we celebrate it. We believe that when people feel respected, it provides space for them to thrive. Inclusion and acceptance fosters a safe environment for everyone. WYN is committed to providing a safe space for all, regardless of race, gender, age, religion, identity, ability, and experience. Together, we explore diverse perspectives to propel our initiatives forward and transform the High Country community. Everyone is welcome here, authentically and holistically.

It is the policy of WYN to actively promote respect for all individuals and families to whom services are being provided.

Employees will protect youth from harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

WYN will maintain legal mandate to report abuse and neglect.

WYN will only release youth to parent or approved adult who is operating under their full faculties.

Physical or manual restraint, mechanical restraint, or seclusion **will never be used**.

Staff shall use only the degree of force necessary to repel or secure a violent child/youth. Degree of force depends upon individual characteristics such as age, size, physical and mental health, and the degree of aggressiveness displayed by the child/youth.

### **A. Our behavior management plan is derived from a relationship-driven model.**

To manage behaviors with positive interventions we will embrace the Love and Logic philosophy.

Positive interventions include, but are not limited to:

1. Helping de-escalate situations by meeting kids where they are;
2. Redirection and/or distraction;
3. WYN may change a child's environment or peers to improve a situation;
4. WYN builds a strong sense of community by allowing for positive peer role models, counseling, reflection, modeling, suggestion, etc.
5. One-on-one time between child/youth and staff is allowed so that strong relationships can be built;
6. Creative approaches to behavior challenges will be instilled whenever possible. Assignments are not punitive and have a logical correlation to the behavior that is in question.
7. Time may be offered separate from the group for an escalated child/youth to regroup and calm down and prepare to return to the group in a positive and effective manner.

**Further, WYN children/youth have the right to:**

1. Expect that, as human beings, they will be treated respectfully, fairly, courteously, consistently, and with dignity and without prejudice, bias or discrimination based on their race, age, religion, national origin, color, creed, gender, ancestry, sexual orientation or disability.
2. Freedom from punishment by other youth.
3. Enjoy freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
4. Freedom of speech when discussing their opinions as long as they are not verbally abusive.
5. Have opinions heard and be included, to the greatest extent possible, when any decisions are being made affecting their life and service they are to receive.
6. Freedom to submit and discuss grievances without fear of reprisal.
7. Access and receive appropriate and reasonable adult guidance, support, and supervision on a regular and emergency basis.

**B. Other interventions that are prohibited by WYN staff & volunteers include:**

1. Any disrespectful, intolerant, or pernicious interaction that would be considered by most reasonable people to constitute verbal, emotional or psychological abuse;
2. Degrading punishment;
3. Forced physical exercise solely for the purpose of eliminating behavior rather than for instructive or athletic value;
4. Being forced into a locked room or other type of secure space
5. Painful body contact;
6. Substances administered to induce painful bodily reactions;
7. Unpleasant tasting food;
8. Contingent application of any noxious substances which includes but is not limited to, noise, bad smells or splashing with water;
9. Any potentially physically painful procedure or stimulus that is administered to the client for the purpose of reducing the frequency or intensity of a behavior, excluding prescribed injections;
10. Any restraints, including manual restraints, other than physical restraints deemed necessary to protect the client from physical harm to self or others.
11. Abuse, neglect, exploitation of a client;
12. Any intervention which would be considered corporal punishment
13. Any withholding of nutrition, hydration or other basic necessities;

**(WYN Policies and Procedures 3.13)**

## **ANTI-BULLYING**

Western Youth Network defines bullying as “the intimidation of others by real or threatened infliction of pain, verbal, written, electronically transmitted, or emotional abuse, or attacks on the property of another. It may include, but is not limited to, actions such as verbal taunts, name-calling and put downs, including verbal put downs that are based upon a person’s gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. It also includes the extortion of money or possessions.

**WYN has ZERO TOLERANCE for bullying and it will be reprimanded on the first offense. If a student uses physical violence or language that attacks a person’s identity they may be required to be picked up immediately. If a student cannot be picked up immediately staff and families will meet to determine if WYN’s After School Program is a good fit for the student.**WYN promotes a high

staff to student ratio with intensive supervision and continuing education for staff and volunteers to prevent bullying or harassment during WYN programs.

**(WYN Policies and Procedures 3.22)**

## **FILING A GRIEVANCE**

There may be a time during your involvement with WYN that you or your child have a serious disagreement with the staff, you think you are being treated unfairly or you may have the idea that no one will listen to you. We hope that this does not happen, but if it does, what do you do?

The first thing to do is talk to the staff member that you are having a problem with and/or their supervisor. Almost every problem you will encounter can be resolved by talking to the person. The staff member will work with youth and/or parents/legal guardians to resolve the issue in a timely manner. However, if they are unable to resolve the issue, you may choose to file a grievance. A grievance should be submitted in writing to ensure accuracy and efficiency in responding and documenting. A staff member will respond to the grievance within 48 hours of it being submitted.

If you are still not satisfied with the outcome, the Executive Director will meet with you within 10 days of the initial written complaint. All efforts will be made to come to a resolution.

Jennifer Warren  
Executive Director  
Western Youth Network, Inc.  
134 Doctors Dr. Boone, NC 28607  
828-264-5174  
warrenj@westernyouthnetwork.org

You also reserve the right to contact the Governor's Advocacy Council for Persons with Disabilities if they feel their rights have been violated.

Governor's Advocacy Council  
1314 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1314  
Phone: (919) 733-9250/ Fax: (919) 733-9173

## **MEDICATION POLICY**

The staff of WYN may not dispense over-the-counter or prescribed medications. However, a WYN staff member may safely store and *witness the self-administering* of medications by youth with prior written consent from the child/youth's parent or guardian. Please talk to a WYN staff member if your child must take medication while involved with a WYN program. **YOUTH MAY NOT HAVE OVER-THE-COUNTER OR PRESCRIBED MEDICATIONS ON THEIR PERSON AT ANY TIME** (special accommodations may be arranged for certain conditions, i.e. diabetics, anaphylactic reactions, etc.). *Any youth that are seen with medication in their possession may be subject to search by WYN staff.*



All WYN staff are certified in First Aid and CPR. There are first aid kits located at each WYN site and/or with a staff member while away from main sites. If a child/youth has a medical emergency while participating in a WYN activity, WYN staff will notify parents/guardian immediately if the emergency warrants advanced medical attention. **(WYN Policies and Procedures 3.15)**

## SEARCH AND SEIZURE POLICY

WYN strives to maintain and support the privacy of the people we serve at all times. Searches may be conducted only when there is a reasonable suspicion that there is possession of the following:

- Alcohol, tobacco, illegal substances, e-cigarettes, potentially harmful chemicals or contraband
- Weapons such as knives, guns, heavy blunt or sharp objects
- Stolen property
- Medications
- Dangerous articles or substances not otherwise noted

**A history of or reputation for engaging in such behaviors does not warrant a search without reasonable suspicion attached to a specific occurrence.**

WYN employees will notify youth if there is a need for a search of his or her person or his or her personal property and explain why it is necessary *prior to conducting the search (unless such case involved suspicion of a weapon or other potentially dangerous items)*. WYN staff will provide the youth with the opportunity to participate in the search by requesting them to empty pockets, surrender item(s) in question, etc. The Sheriff's Department of the county in which the search took place will dispose of any illicit non-prescription drugs and stolen property. Other articles will be turned over to the youth's parent or guardian by WYN staff.

Youth can help us avoid searches by never bringing in something that doesn't belong and by letting a staff member know when someone has something that they shouldn't. Remember, it is always better to have nothing to hide. **(WYN Policies and Procedures 3.12)**

## COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

In the case of severe contagious illness or disease, strict adherence to safety measures is required. WYN will work to maintain a balance between the individual rights of students, employees, and volunteers and the control of communicable disease. No staff or consumer with a communicable disease shall be denied access to WYN services on the basis of an opinion of a single individual.

### Consumers

WYN administration shall notify WYN consumers, staff and volunteers when a certified health official verifies that a communicable disease or illness represents a threat to other WYN consumers. These may include chicken pox, measles, whooping cough, meningitis, or other serious reportable diseases.

### Prevention & Control

Whenever consumers vomit, have diarrhea, have fevers over 100°, and/or have rashes of unknown origin, they shall be isolated from the rest of the consumer population. Their parents and/or emergency contacts shall be notified and asked to pick up their child. Consumers should not return to WYN until these symptoms have subsided.

**(WYN Policies and Procedures 3.8).**

## **Safety and Emergency Action Plan**

ASP staff have a specific emergency action plan that they are each trained on. ASP staff have weekly Wilderness First Aid Refreshers and entire staff and youth fire drills will be done twice a semester. Each room is equipped with a fire alarm and fire extinguishers are located in the main office hall, beside the boys bathroom, and across from the back kitchen.

## **No-Show Policy**

A youth who accumulates four or more unexcused absences, displays violent or inappropriate behavior despite attempts to address the behaviors, or refuses to work towards agreed-upon goals may earn an unsuccessful termination from ASP. A Noncompliant termination from ASP will be defined as the youth not following program expectations.

## **INFORMED CONSENT**

Informed consent of the consumer/client or the consumer's legally responsible person will be obtained prior to the initiation of services in a language/manner that the person can understand.

**(WYN Policies & Procedures 3.7)**

Each voluntary consumer or legally responsible person will be informed of:

- a) the alleged benefits, potential risks, and possible alternative methods of service.
- b) the length of time for which consent is valid, and the procedures that are to be followed if the consumer or legally responsible person wishes to withdraw consent.

Western Youth Network, Inc. will not provide services to involuntary consumers/clients (meaning a consumer who after being informed of their rights chooses not to consent to services).

## **TRANSPORTATION GUIDELINES**

There may be an occasion when a student is experiencing behavioral episodes that may endanger him/herself or others if transported in a vehicle. Anytime an employee is concerned about transporting a consumer who is acting out, the employee will pull over for up to 30 minutes, or until the student has calmed down.

If the student continues to have behavioral problems, the staff members will call the student's parents to pick them up from wherever the vehicle has pulled over.

**(WYN Policies and Procedures 3.14)**

## **DRESS CODE**

WYN respects the individuality and creativity of all people. In order to provide a safe and supportive atmosphere for all kids, we ask that you not wear clothing that may be offensive to others. We require all staff, volunteers, and youth to adhere to the dress code of County Schools while participating in WYN programs. Attire may be regulated on a case-by-case basis by WYN staff. A copy of County Schools Dress Code Policy is available upon request.

WYN sometimes has extra clothing on hand for youth and their families. Please talk to a staff member for assistance.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

All information that Western Youth Network collects about youth and/or families is protected. Staff, volunteers, and interns receive confidentiality training upon employment.

Sometimes we may need to work with other professionals outside of WYN in order to provide you with the best possible service. We encourage and support collaboration with other youth serving agencies such as the school system and other local mental health providers such as, Blue Mountain Center for the Healing Arts, Mentor Behavioral Health Services, McKinney and Associates, Children's Council, Juvenile Court, Mountain Alliance, Department of Social Services, Daymark Recovery Services, and others.

Your written consent will be requested before information is shared outside of our agency. In the event of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a person, confidentiality will be broken.

**(WYN Policies and Procedures 3.6)**

## Social Media Policy

Parental consent will be documented before a client will be able to participate and/or have their image used in association with WYN's programs. If a client's image is to be used then permission from the parent/legal guardian is required each time. If a client is used in social media posts then the client and their guardian must be informed of which platform the post will be to, purpose of the post, how confidentiality will be upheld, and disclaimer as to how posts on the internet can be accessed now and in the future.

Staff members and volunteers will refrain from 'following' or 'friending' students that are currently in their WYN program. WYN has an organization instagram, twitter, and facebook that students can 'follow' or 'friend' and can communicate appropriately with staff through this channel.

**(WYN Policies and Procedures 3.3)**

## CONSUMER RECORDS

The Western Youth Network shall maintain a consumer record for each individual admitted to any organization program. This record shall contain, but is not limited to:

- Name (first, middle, last, maiden)
- Date of Birth
- Race, gender, and marital status
- Admission date
- Discharge date

Emergency information for each consumer shall include the name, address, and telephone number of the person to be contacted in case of sudden illness or accident. The name, address, and telephone number of the consumer's preferred physician will be kept as needed.

Documentation of services will be kept on various WYN forms.

These forms include, but are not limited to:

- Medical Info. form
- Transportation form

- Scholarship form
- Client notes (to be kept by WYN staff)
- Enrollment/Referral form
- Photo/Information release
- Permission forms
- Pre & Post surveys
- Confidentiality form(s)
- Incident Reports 📄 IEPs or 504s **(WYN Policies and Procedures 3.16)**

## Parental Involvement

At WYN we expect for parents to be involved in each program their child is in. This may look different depending on what program the student is in.

*For Mentoring:* Parents should support and encourage the relationship between the mentor and their child by making sure their child is available for the mentor and by keeping good communication between the mentor and the parent. Parents are not encouraged to go on outings with the mentor and their child.

*For ASP and Summer:* Parents should support and encourage their child to attend ASP and summer program. Parents should be willing to come to meetings with after school staff, provide further discipline at home, and to be supportive of their child through the difficult middle school years.

## Pick-Up Policy

The latest a student may be picked up from WYN After School is 6:00pm.

The latest a student may be picked up from WYN Summer Camp is 5:30pm.

In the event of a late pick-up, WYN staff will utilize the following policy:

**A late pickup fee of five dollars per child, per every five minutes (\$1.00 per minute) will be charged to parents picking up children after 6:00p.m. We reserve the right to dismiss a child from the program after the third instance of late pickup. In the event a parent experiences a true emergency, the program coordinator should be notified by 6:00 p.m. If no contact has been received, attempts will be made to contact persons on the child's emergency list. If the child is not picked up by 6:45 p.m. and no contact can be made with caregivers, local authorities may be called.**

Any adult picking up a student that is not listed as an additional pick up on their enrollment spreadsheet will not have a student release to them unless a parent or guardian has contacted WYN first. Adults must bring photo ID with them when picking up students so staff can verify identification before releasing students.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

### **Western Youth Network Contact Information**

#### **After School and Summer Camp Programming**

828-773-2566

134 Doctors Dr. Boone, NC 28607

#### **Administration, Mentoring, Community Health**

828-264-5174

134 Doctors Dr. Boone, NC 28607

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