



West Side Community Services

Teen Program Parent Handbook

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About Us

West Side Community Services (WSCS) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that offers education, arts, wellness, and prevention programs for young children, families, school-age kids and teens, adults, and senior citizens living in west Buffalo. WSCS fosters the stability, security, and well-being of our vibrant and dynamic community by engaging, connecting, and supporting its residents. Any and all Buffalo residents are welcomed and accepted for exactly who they are! WSCS is located at 161 Vermont Street, Buffalo, NY 14213.

Program Description

WSCS offers a structured drop-in center with a variety of programs and activities for teens age 13-19 years old Monday through Thursday from 3-8 p.m. during the summer. During the academic year, the program operates Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings. Many of the programs are available free of charge, although some activities may charge a nominal fee to cover material costs. WSCS has various rooms that are open to teens with a variety of games that can be played and arts and crafts supplies that can be used. Items like game controllers, paddles, and balls are signed out to help with scheduling the activity, as well as assisting in the care of the items. On occasion, and weather permitting, there may be activities outdoors depending on programming for the day. Our staff and volunteers have been screened for the safety of the teens and will be present to supervise, assist with programming, and provide mentoring.

Registration

Teens are required to have an updated registration packet on file to participate in programs at WSCS. A new registration form is required at the start of each academic year AND summer program. Registration is free and teens must behave and adhere to program rules, which are outlined in the registration packet. Parents/guardians should carefully review this handbook and the registration forms with their teen before signing the forms. Upon submission of these forms, all parents/guardians may receive a follow-up phone call to ensure the information is correct. Registration packets are available at WSCS and on our website (wscsbuffalo.org). Teens and their parent(s) or legal guardian(s) are required to provide the following information:

1. Current contact information, address, age, school, and grade
2. Medical info, emergency contacts, allergies, and other pertinent health information (signed)
3. Current school-year OR summer registration packet with code of conduct agreement (signed)
4. Release / Pickup Authorization form (signed)
5. Email addresses are strongly encouraged as a majority of notices are distributed via email.
6. We also recommend you like and follow us on Facebook (facebook.com/WestSideCommunityServices) and Instagram ([@wscsbuffalo](https://www.instagram.com/wscsbuffalo)), as this may be the quickest way to receive notifications of updates and announcements.



TEEN RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following is a list of rights and responsibilities to guide your teen's behavior while attending WSCS teen programs and participating in WSCS-sponsored events and activities. The list is not intended to be all inclusive. Parents should promote cooperation and agreement between the home and WSCS to develop good citizenship and high standards of behavior in our teens.

Teens have the right to:

- Participate in all WSCS activities in a safe and supportive environment.
- Be supervised by highly qualified staff and volunteers.
- Contact their parent or guardian. If needed, teens must ask a staff member for permission before using WSCS phone. A call to you from our office would come through as (716) 884-6616.

Teens are responsible for:

- Abiding by the Code of Conduct Agreement at all times while at WSCS and at WSCS-sponsored events and activities.
- Being courteous and respectful to WSCS staff, volunteers, and fellow teens at all times.
- Showing respect for facility property, as well as the personal property of others.
- Following the instructions of WSCS staff and volunteers. If a teen disobeys any WSCS staff or volunteer, either by action or word, a parent/guardian will be notified and possible suspension may occur.

- Signing in and out every time they enter or exit WSCS. Teens must use their correct first and last name, enter an accurate time of entry/exit, and write legibly on sign-in/sign-out forms. Once signed out, the teen may not re-enter that day.
- Reporting any potentially dangerous and/or illegal situations regarding weapons, drugs, alcohol, fireworks, fights, property damage, theft, etc. or information regarding such to a staff member or volunteer.
- Obeying general facility rules.

To promote a safe environment:

- **Cell phones** – Cell phones may be used in the facility. When using a cell phone, be courteous toward others and remember your conversation will be heard by anyone around you. Viewing or sharing inappropriate material is prohibited. Using texting or messaging to bully or communicate inappropriately is also prohibited.
- **Dress** – WSCS staff shall enforce the dress code consistently and in a manner that does not reinforce or increase marginalization or oppression of any group based on race, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, cultural observance, household income, or body type/size. Teens are *not* allowed to wear images or language that create a hostile or intimidating environment based on any protected class or consistently marginalized groups. All teens and staff should understand that they are responsible for managing their own personal 'distractions' without regulating their peers' clothing/self-expression.

- **Fireworks/flammables** – Teens are not to be in possession of fireworks of any kind while at WSCS or surrounding area, nor are they to have possession of matches, lighters, or other combustible materials.
- **Interpersonal relationships** – Appropriate personal relationships are encouraged. WSCS policy is one of “hands off.” Holding hands, arm-in-arm, sitting on laps, hugging, and kissing are not appropriate while at WSCS. Sexual harassment will not be tolerated.
- **Swearing/profanity** – Teens are not to use profanity or vulgar language. Swearing will not be tolerated. Teens will be counseled to be aware of their language. The circumstances will determine if more severe consequences are needed.
- **Threats** – Threats of personal injury upon other teens, staff, and/or volunteers are strictly prohibited and will be dealt with in a swift and severe manner.
- **Tobacco, possession of tobacco, and smoking** – WSCS is a Smoke Free Zone. If a WSCS teen has in his/her possession tobacco or cigarettes, vapes, cigarette lighters, or matches, this is grounds for suspension. Teens who are with other teens who are smoking should make a responsible decision to remove themselves from the area/situation, otherwise, they too may be suspended.

RULES VS. LAWS

The following are not only against WSCS’s rules but are against the law, too. As such, the Buffalo Police Department will be notified if any teen is caught breaking the law.

- Assault & battery
- Sexual assault

- Gambling (any form of gambling will not be tolerated)
- Harassment/hate crimes
- Illegal substances, drugs, and alcohol
- Serious injury, attempting to cause – If a teen attempts to cause serious injury to another person, except in the case of self-defense, it will be recommended they be expelled permanently from WSCS.
- Theft – Teens have the responsibility for taking care of their own possessions. Teens are discouraged from bringing large amounts of money or valuable items to WSCS. WSCS is not responsible for any lost or stolen items brought by a teen into the facility.
- Vandalism – Damaging WSCS property, facility property, and/or the property of others will not be tolerated in any matter. Incidents will be documented at all times by WSCS staff to keep a record of such behavior. Teens and/or parents may be held liable to pay for damages.
- Weapons – Any teen will be suspended and possibly expelled for possession of any firearm, knife, explosive, or other dangerous object at WSCS or at any WSCS-sponsored activity.

DISCIPLINE OF TEENS

Participation at WSCS is a privilege. Teens are expected to exhibit good behavior and abide by the Code of Conduct Agreement. Inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated. WSCS's policy for dealing with violations of the Code of Conduct Agreement are as follows:

- **First offense:** The first offense will be recorded and result in a warning.
- **Second offense:** When a second offense occurs, it will be recorded and the parent/guardian will be notified by phone, along with an email (or mail) letter describing the incident.

- **Third offense:** When a third offense occurs, notification to the parent/guardian will occur as in the second offense. In addition, the teen will lose the privilege of participating at WSCS for a period determined by the WSCS Discipline Team, based on the severity of the offense.

If a teen is guilty of breaking the law, in addition to simply violating the Code of Conduct Agreement, the teen faces the consequences of the law and forfeits their privilege of participating at WSCS for a term determined by the WSCS Discipline Team.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

WSCS conducts monthly fire/evacuation drills and quarterly severe weather and lockdown drills.

Parents, faculty, and teens will not be made aware of fire drill dates or times, as this is the best way to assess the effectiveness of fire and emergency/evacuation plans. Parents will be informed of lockdown drills via email or paper notice.

Fire/emergency evacuation

WSCS staff will use the sign-in/sign-out sheet to determine that everyone has exited the building safely.

Please stay with staff and meet at the opposite corner of the parking lot at the corner of Vermont and Fargo Avenues so all teens can be accounted for before leaving the area. This ensures the safety of participants as well as that of WSCS staff, volunteers, and emergency responders.

Emergency care

Each staff member and volunteer shall assume responsibility for emergency care involving a teen while he/she is under our program supervision. Parents and guardians will be notified of any participant injury. Buffalo EMS will be called for any injury WSCS staff determines necessary. Staff will submit an incident report to the senior staff member on duty before leaving that day.

Building closures

WSCS may be closed during inclement weather, such as severe snowstorms, and will typically follow the lead of Buffalo Public Schools closures. Every effort will be made to inform all participants and scheduled staff and volunteers of all closures. These announcements will always be made via social media on our Facebook and Instagram accounts, as well as posted on our website (wscsbuffalo.org).

Emergency contact information

It is imperative that WSCS is notified of any contact information changes. Please notify staff immediately of any phone number, address, or email change. Please provide emergency contacts of who to notify in case parents or guardians are unavailable. Update requests will be issued annually at the beginning of each school year and at the start of the summer program.



Youth Programs at West Side Community Services General Information

Location: 161 Vermont Street, Buffalo, NY 14213

West Side Community Services office hours:

School year: Monday-Friday 10 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Summer (July 8-Sept 2, 2024): Monday-Thurs 10 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., Friday 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

'23-'24 West Side Teens (academic year program) hours of operation: Tuesday-Thursday, 5:30-8:30 p.m.

2024 Project Pathways (summer program) hours of operation: Monday-Thursday, 3-8 p.m.

Program contact information:

Marino Frias

Senior Program Manager, Youth Department

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Executive Director

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