

Girls Incorporated of Greater Lowell Parent Information Packet



Mission: Girls Incorporated of Greater Lowell inspires all girls to be strong, smart and bold. Through creative programs in a safe and nurturing environment, we strive to teach the independence and personal responsibility girls need to succeed.

Purpose: The purpose of the program at Girls Incorporated of Greater Lowell is to prepare girls for responsible and confident adulthood, economic independence and personal fulfillment.

Philosophy of the Child Care Program: To provide a safe, supportive and caring environment for girls during after school hours and school vacations.

Goals: To provide quality care that benefits each girl physically, emotionally and educationally by:

- Increasing self-awareness, confidence and feelings of self-esteem.
- Developing increased social skills through interaction with peers.
- Providing adult supervision by caring, supportive staff who understand the girls' needs, challenge them to excel, and maintain high expectations for their future accomplishments.

Description of Program: Girls Incorporated of Greater Lowell offers an afterschool program for licensed (voucher) girls ages 6-12 and non-licensed (non-voucher) girls ages 5-18 living in the Greater Lowell area. There are also summer and vacation programs. Activities that are provided include sports, crafts, computer skills, cooking, health education, science, math, literacy, special speakers, events, and field trips.

Non-Discrimination Policy: Girls Incorporated of Greater Lowell does not discriminate on the basis of race, religious affiliation, cultural heritage, handicap status, sexual orientation, political beliefs, age, sex, marital status or national origin in hiring procedures and/or in providing services.

Schedule: The afterschool program is scheduled Monday through Friday from 2:00pm to 6:00pm during the school year. A full day schedule (8:30am to 6:00pm) is offered during vacation weeks in December, February and April and summer program hours are 8:30am to 5:30pm.

Girls Incorporated facilities are closed on the following holidays:

New Years Day	Labor Day
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Columbus Day
Presidents Day	Veterans Day
Good Friday	Thanksgiving Day
Memorial Day	Day After Thanksgiving
Patriots Day	Christmas Eve
Independence Day	Christmas Day

The facilities are open on school half days and early release days for licensed day care (voucher program) only. Girls Incorporated of Greater Lowell is closed when school in Lowell is cancelled due to inclement weather conditions. Girls Inc. may also close programs for a day of staff training (staff development days will be announced at least two months in advance and should not exceed two per year).

Food: Girls Incorporated provides an afternoon snack each day, and also provides a morning snack on vacation days. Girls may elect to bring their own snack instead of eating what the program provides; however, snacks brought from home must be healthy (such as fruits, crackers, pretzels, cheese, nuts). NOTE: Girls who attend the full day vacation week programs must bring their own lunch. Children's lunches should have nutritious foods such as sandwiches (for example peanut butter/jelly or ham/cheese/tomato), fruits, crackers, vegetable sticks, milk or fruit juice, etc. Please do not send fast food lunches, candy, soda or large bags of chips and junk food.

Transportation: Girls Incorporated offers transportation from school to our facility. This service is included for licensed day care as dictated by each family's child care voucher. Transportation is offered to other members for a monthly fee. We are responsible for the children we pick up from the time they get into our vehicles until the time they sign out at the end of the day. We are not responsible for any members who take other transportation or walk to our program until the moment they walk into the building and sign in.

Transportation is provided by Girls Incorporated for small group field trips, and commercial bus rental is arranged by us for large group field trips. In the event of a vehicle breakdown or other emergency, the driver will phone the Girls Incorporated facility and alternate transportation will be sent.

For parents who would like their daughters to walk home at the end of the program day, it is required that they sign a permission slip for this purpose. For those walking home, our responsibility ends once they sign out.

During the school vacation program and the summer program, parents are responsible for morning drop-off and afternoon pickup. If parents are repeatedly late in picking up a child, Girls Inc. reserves the right to terminate service.

Release Policy: Children may be released only to the individuals listed in the “release to” section of the membership form. Please call us (or send a note with a phone number where you can be reached) in advance if anyone else will be picking up your child. (Also, please make sure that the person picking up your child can furnish us with adequate proof of identity (i.e. driver’s license)).

Attendance: Parents of girls in licensed day care and of girls using Girls Incorporated transportation must call our office at 978-458-6529 before 12:00pm if their child will not be attending that day.

Emergency Health Care: First Aid will be administered on site by a qualified person. If further treatment is necessary, parents will be notified and transportation will be secured to an emergency care facility. A copy of our Health Care Policy is available upon request.

Medication: If a child is to take medication while in the program, the parent must provide written authorization. Prescription medication must be in its original container. This container, or doctor’s note, must specify the recipient, dosage and schedule. A record will be kept of all medication given.

Infectious Illness Exclusion Policy:

Girls Incorporated follows the same illness exclusion guidelines as the Lowell public schools; if the child is ill such that she could not attend school, then she should not attend Girls Incorporated. Girls will be excluded from after school child care for suspicion of a communicable disease until successful treatment has been started or a physician states that the child may return. Both the Department of Public Health and the parents will be notified of any contagious disease.

Administrative Organization of the Program:

Tracy Ingersoll, Executive Director	Responsible for overall operation of the program and supervision of all full-time employees.
Jennifer Demers, Program Director	Responsible for operations/scheduling of programs and supervision of program staff.
Katelyn Adams, Site Coordinator	Responsible for daily activities, supervision of program staff, and working directly with children and their families.
Bob MacPhail, Business Manager	Responsible for business/financial aspects of daily operations, maintenance of facility, attendance records.

Christa Brown, Outreach and
Special Programs Coordinator

Responsible for implementation of Girls Inc.
curriculum in local schools and special
onsite programs.

Program Specialists

Responsible for planning and implementing
daily activities with the children.

Staffing: Girls Incorporated will maintain a leader-to-girl ratio of no more than 1:13.

Parental Involvement and Visits: We believe that parental involvement is vital to the success of any child care program. Therefore, our staff will be available for parent conferences to discuss ideas, suggestions, problems, and/or the child's progress. If a parent has a specific concern or complaint about the program or staff, she/he must speak to the Program Director or Site Coordinator. Parents are also invited to visit and observe the program at any time. If you wish to meet with a staff member, please call our office to arrange for a mutually convenient time.

Records: Children's records are kept confidential. Parents may have access to and copies of their child's record.

Referral Plan: If, after observation and communication among the staff, any child shows signs of a need to be referred to an agency offering social or mental health services, or educational or medical assistance, the staff will set up an appointment with the child's parent(s) to discuss the problem and make a referral. Staff will keep a written record of incidents/concerns for the child's file, for use in making appropriate referrals, and will provide the parent(s) with a copy of these records. The results of the staff-parent meeting will be recorded. Parents and staff will also have access to a referral list of community resources maintained by Girls Inc. (available upon request).

Registration Procedures:

For Licensed Day Care (Voucher Program): Upon being referred to Girls Incorporated of Greater Lowell by Child Care Circuit, the parent must complete an on-site orientation visit. This visit includes meeting with the staff, touring the building, and completing all necessary paperwork for registration.

For Non-Licensed Day Care (Non-voucher): Parents are encouraged to set up an orientation visit. This visit includes meeting with the staff, touring the building, and completing all necessary paperwork for registration. A \$15.00 membership fee is applied and must be renewed yearly in September.

Fees and Payments: Licensed Day Care fees are determined by a voucher. They are due weekly and should be paid one week in advance. Non-Licensed Day Care fees are determined on a sliding scale and are due monthly. Fees are due by the first of the month for the after-school program and weekly, in advance, for school and summer vacations. If payment is not made on a timely basis, Girls Incorporated reserves the right to terminate service.

All parents must make arrangements for their children to be picked up by 6:00pm., as we do not provide any transportation home. The following late fee policy has been established to ensure parents comply with this pickup time:

- A \$5 charge for the first 15-minute delay or part thereof.
- A \$10 charge for the second 15-minute delay or part thereof.

Withdrawal: Parents with vouchers must give two weeks notice to terminate enrollment.

Prevention of Abuse and/or Neglect: All staff members shall report suspected incidents of abuse and/or neglect to the Site Coordinator. The Site Coordinator will report to the Department of Children and Families and file a 51A and notify the Early Education and Care office. Girls Incorporated of Greater Lowell will cooperate in all investigations of abuse and/or neglect.

Phone Use Policy: As stated in the After School Program's rules and regulations, girls may only make phone calls for emergency reasons (as in the case of illness). All phone calls must be made with a staff member's permission.

Furthermore, Girls Inc. strongly discourages bringing cell phones to the program, as Girls Inc. cannot be responsible for any loss or damage that may occur. Girls should not be using cell phones while attending Girls Inc. programs; Girls Inc. phones are to be used when an emergency call is necessary.

Internet Use Policy:

Availability of Internet Access

Girls Incorporated offers access to the Internet (an international, unregulated computer network which provides digital pathways to information sites) during After School, Vacation Week and Summer Programs. Girls Inc. members typically may access the Internet during activity periods as well as during unstructured time at the beginning and end of the program day.

Disclaimer Notice

During computer access times, Girls Inc. staff and/or volunteers are on hand to help with girls' questions and generally oversee computer use. However, the girls operate the individual workstations themselves, and ultimately Girls Inc. has no control over the availability of websites, which sites will post, or the content of information – text or images – that is retrieved from the Internet. This information could contain content that Girls Inc., the child, or parent may consider objectionable or inappropriate for the child to be viewing.

Girls and their parents should be aware that the Internet may contain inaccurate and incomplete information, and that the Internet may contain information that may not be suitable for children, such as controversial or sexually explicit material that some may find offensive or inappropriate.

Members are responsible and accountable for following all rules and policies when using Girls Inc. computers. It should also be noted that Girls Inc. staff or designated volunteer instructors may review files and communications to ensure that members are using the network and equipment properly. Members and parents should not expect that information stored or displayed on Girls Inc. machines will be private.

Girls Inc. will not provide e-mail accounts or access to members unless as part of a specific exchange program with another agency. Members who have personal e-mail accounts from another source may access those accounts from Girls Inc. computers only with prior parent/guardian permission.

Internet Safety Instruction

Girls Inc. will offer introductory instruction for all members on appropriate use of the Internet and related safety practices. The instruction will cover Girls Inc.'s policies as well as offer examples of useful and age-appropriate online resources for the girls to consider accessing.

Parents are strongly encouraged to stay in touch with their child's online activities -- discuss what is being seen or done online and, when possible, explore the web together.

Internet Use Rules and Regulations

1. The following uses of Girls Inc. computers and Internet access are prohibited:
 - a. Accessing or transmitting any material which is deemed unlawful, obscene, sexually explicit, or otherwise inappropriate for children
 - b. Using the Internet in any other illegal manner (harassing others, hacking, releasing viruses, etc.)

- c. Altering or damaging Girls Inc. software, hardware or data
- d. Unauthorized software installation
- e. Accessing (or attempting to access) unauthorized files, passwords, etc.
- f. Copyright infringement
- g. Providing Internet access to an unauthorized user
- h. Unauthorized downloading or copying of information or software
- i. Using the Internet in ways not authorized by parent/guardian
- j. Not complying with instructions given by Girls Inc. staff/volunteers

Violations of Policy

Any violation of Girls Inc.'s rules and policies regarding Internet use, as well as other program rules, and applicable government laws shall be reviewed individually by case. Any violations of these rules and policies may result in the loss of Internet and other computer privileges.

The Department of Early Education and Care is our Licensing Authority

Parents or guardians may contact EEC with any questions or concerns.

51 Sleeper Street, 4th Floor
Boston, MA 02210
Main Line: (617)988-6600
Fax: (617)988-2451

After School Program Overview

The After School Program is open Monday through Friday from 2:00pm to 6:00pm when school is in session. We follow the Lowell public schools calendar and are closed on snow days.

Each day after sign-in and snack, members are able to choose from multiple structured group activities which are offered at 2:30, 3:30 and 4:30. Participants have the opportunity to choose activities in areas such as computers, cooking, art, physical fitness, games, reading, science, and homework help. We also offer special events such as holiday parties, guest speakers, field trips and service projects.

School Vacation Program Overview

Girls Incorporated offers a full day program when school is not in session. The program is open from 8:30am to 6:00pm. Activities include local field trips, computer time, arts and crafts, cooking, swimming, games and gym activities.

Summer Vacation Program Overview:

The Summer Vacation Program is provided Monday through Friday from 8:30am to 5:30pm (with an extended day from 7:30-8:30 available for an additional fee). The morning part of the program consists of trips to local swimming pools, weather permitting. On days where swimming is beyond walking distance, we ask that you drop your child off at the pool, where she will sign in. Lunch is provided for all members most weeks of the summer through the LHS program, but members may bring their own healthy lunch if they choose. The afternoons offer structured activity sessions such as outside fun, gym, arts and crafts, and classes until 4:00pm. **We ask that you refrain from picking up your daughter until after activities have finished.** Thursdays are reserved for large field trips to local attractions including museums, lakes, beaches, zoos and other educationally based sites. **On these days we request that your child be dropped off prior to 9am and picked up after 5pm.** On Fridays, each group goes on a mini field trip to a local museum or organization to learn about the local community and the many resources in it.

Please be sure that your daughter has the following items with her every day:

- Swimsuit and towel
- Sunblock (we recommend that all children apply it prior to arrival as well)
- Bag for storing items (plastic bag for wet clothing/towels)
- Sturdy and comfortable walking shoes (sneakers or close-toed sandals)
- Clothing appropriate for outdoor activity (check weather)
- A dry change of clothes and underwear (if she comes in swimsuit)
- Packed lunch/snack that requires no heating or refrigeration (when LHS lunch cannot be provided)
- Extra drinking water (especially for field trip days).

We suggest that all girls wear a Girls Incorporated T-shirt on field trip days to help the group stay together and be easily identified. T-shirts can be purchased at the Girls Inc. Store. Other Girls Inc. items are also available for sale.

Member Responsibilities:

- All girls must sign in at the desk near the front door when they arrive. Girls may only sign in for themselves, not for other members. Parents or designated adults must sign girls out at pickup.

- When the girls arrive they should hang their coats on hangers and their bags on hooks. Belongings can also be put in plastic baskets. All belongings should be labeled in permanent marker with your daughter's name (first and last). This will help in identifying lost/misplaced items. Girls are responsible for their own belongings. The Lost & Found is cleaned out periodically. Any unlabeled belongings will be given to a local charity or thrown out. Girls Inc. does not take responsibility for missing or damaged items.
- Girls are expected to help clean up the center as needed. Tasks include cleaning the snack area, washing the snack dishes, picking up stray papers, etc. Please encourage your daughters to take pride in the appearance of our center and to pick up after themselves. If they are in the process of playing a game or doing a project, they are expected to pick up and put away what they are using before they leave.
- Girls are not allowed to make phone calls unless they obtain special permission from Girls Inc. staff or a note from their parent. Girls may not call for non-emergency reasons, such as forgetting a bathing suit or not knowing who will pick them up.
- Every girl must go to a class or "choice" during activity time. Girls must remain in the supervised activity area until escorted back to the game room with their group.
- Music: we encourage the girls to share and listen to a variety of music and musical styles, and we want them to be able to enjoy music that they like while in our program. However, we cannot allow music with lyrics that are inappropriate for a child care setting. Unfortunately, this means we have to restrict listening to radio stations that play explicit lyrics during our program hours. We also ask that you please check any CDs that your daughter might want to bring in and make sure they are appropriate for children. Thank you for your help.
- Members are expected to be RESPECTFUL of the staff, the property, and other members of Girls Incorporated. In addition, there are certain rules that the girls need to follow on a daily basis. The following are not allowed:

Fighting/Hitting	Swearing/Rude Language
Taking off Shoes	Running
Gum Chewing	Carrying Other Children
Eating/Drinking on Carpeted Areas	Brushing Hair/Sharing Brushes
Sitting on Tables or Counters	Applying Make-up or Nail Polish
Leaving Program Areas Without Permission	

If members do not follow these rules or if they behave in ways which a staff member feels are unsafe, troublesome, or disrespectful, disciplinary action will result. The most common consequence is for the girl(s) involved to have a “time out”. They may also be asked to write down solutions to the problem or how they could behave differently next time. If these approaches do not work, or if the behavior is threatening to other people and the program, a “warning slip” may be written to inform the parent of the problem. Warning slips must be signed by the parent and returned the next day.

Repeated issues involving disrespect or misbehavior may result in one or more of the following

- Losing privilege of participating in special classes and field trips
- A conference with the parent/guardian to discuss a plan for improvement
- Taking time off from attending the After School Program

Extreme behavior cases involving violence, stealing, or destruction of property may result in an immediate suspension or permanent removal from the program.

Good Behavior:

- Each month, a younger 5-8 year old member and an older 9-18 year old member are chosen to be Girls Incorporated’s Members of the Month. They are selected by the staff on the basis of behavior, enthusiasm for programs, generosity, courage, helpfulness, attendance (particularly with classes) and overall attitude. They are invited to attend several special events and may be called upon to represent Girls Incorporated at various times throughout the year. From the Members of the Month, a Member of the Year is chosen. The Member of the Year is announced at the Girls Incorporated Celebration of Today’s Woman event held every June.

Parent Responsibilities:

- Please encourage your child to participate in activities, to try new things, and to make new friends. Review the rules with her and help us reinforce the importance of respecting herself, others, and property.
- Stay “in touch” with what your child is doing during her time at Girls Inc. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to talk to a staff member. You can speak with us when you pick up your child, or you can call any time during business hours.

- Parents are expected to check their daughters' heads periodically for signs of head lice. The Lowell public schools also conduct periodic checks for all students. Girls Incorporated or your child's school nurse can provide you with information about lice prevention and treatment. Unfortunately, we do not have a nurse on staff to conduct head checks. If we do notice a problem or if the child complains of an itchy head, however, we will check and call the parent to pick up the child if treatment is needed.
- As a safety precaution, we do NOT allow children to wait at the door and leave when they see their parent/guardian arrive. Therefore, it is necessary for the adult to come into the building. In addition, we require all release people to sign the sign-out sheet before they leave the building.
- Special announcements and information for parents will be posted on the bulletin boards in the front lobby and hallway. Letters and flyers will be passed out at the sign-out desk during pick-up time. Please check these locations regularly.