

CASWELL COUNTY PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILDREN

Teen Outreach Program (TOP)

YOUTH/PARENT HANDBOOK



Caswell County Partnership for Children
1084 NC Highway 86 N
PO Box 664
Yanceyville, NC 27379
Phone: 336-694-1538
Fax: 336-694-7666
ccp4child@esinc.net
www.caswellchildren.org



1. INTRODUCTION

The Teen Outreach Program (TOP) is a Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative operated by the Caswell County Partnership for Children (CCPFC) with funding provided by the North Carolina Division of Public Health. Space for the program is provided by Caswell County Schools.

TOP is a youth development and dropout prevention program for children in 6th- 12th grades. Youth receive reproductive health information, including abstinence and contraceptive education; skills and resiliency building; and service learning to promote citizenship.

Because of the special nature and content of this program, participants are expected to keep confidential any information disclosed by other participants in the program. The program staff will also keep confidential any information disclosed in the Teen Outreach Program unless it meets the following criteria:

- The teen threatens to harm himself or herself, or
- The teen threatens to harm another, or
- The teen discloses information that indicates a child may have been abused or neglected.

TOP Participants are expected to follow the policies and procedures established by Caswell County Schools while on school property and by the approved transportation vendor while being transported. TOP Participants will have the opportunity to provide input into developing the program's group rules.

2. ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES

Parents/guardians are required to complete and submit an enrollment application. Included in this application packet are a registration form, consent and release and exchange of information agreement, code of conduct form, health form, transportation plan and release, a computer skills permission/internet usage form, and publicity release form.

Participants that meet the eligibility criteria are accepted on a "first come/first serve" basis. Parents/guardians will be notified of their child's acceptance into the program. Once spaces are filled, participants will be placed on a formal waiting list. TOP serves approximately 25 teens per school.

After missing two successive meetings or activities, every attempt will be made to contact the participant. After missing 3 successive meetings or activities, the program staff will contact the parent/guardian and advise them that if the teen does not begin attending regularly, the teen will be dropped from the program to allow space for another teen who is able to participate. If illness or other situation causes your teen to be absent from TOP, please contact the CCPFC. Good communication is key to a successful program!

3. SAFE ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE OF STUDENTS

Participants must appropriately sign in for the day and remain in the program until the program is dismissed. Parents will be called if teens who are scheduled to attend are not present. Parents should notify program staff in writing if their teen will be late or needs to leave early.

Teens will be expected to abide by the transportation plan signed by their parent/guardian. Any changes to the plan must be submitted in writing to CCPFC. It is important that program staff be informed in writing prior to any changes in persons picking up a teen or if the designated person is going to be late. The staff member on duty may, at any time, require identification of any person picking up a teen. We strongly recommend that teens not walk home or be released to anyone under the age of 18.

Parents/guardians must be on time when picking up their teens from TOP sessions and special activities. If any emergency arises and you must be late, please notify CCPFC at 336-694-1538 before 5:00 pm or contact the program staff at the cell phone number that was provided at the beginning of the program. Parents/guardians arriving for their children after closing time who have not contacted the program staff will be charged a late fee of \$5.00 for each 15 minute late period or parts thereof after 5:15 p.m. This fee is designed as a penalty and not as a privilege. **CHECKS OR MONEY ORDERS SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO CASWELL COUNTY PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILDREN.** Parents who are repeatedly late picking up their child are in jeopardy of having their child terminated from the program.

4. COMMUNICATION

Good communication is necessary for any program to be successful. You may contact the program staff and/or the Executive Director any time you have questions, concerns or ideas. The Caswell County Partnership for Children office hours are from 8:00am to 5:00pm Monday through Friday. You will also be provided with the cell phone number where you can reach program staff during program hours.

An orientation and review of group rules will be held periodically to make certain each teen is informed about safety procedures, rules, and emergency actions. Each teen is responsible for following the guidelines.

5. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

When special care of a teen is needed due to circumstances unknown to the program staff, we ask that parents inform the staff. This may pertain to special eating problems, allergies, accidents occurring outside the program, changes at home, etc. Please notify the program staff if your teen is agitated upon arrival to the program, or of any conflicts he or she may have with other participants. Every effort will be made to help your teen avoid potential problems.

6. ACTIVITY SCHEDULE

A schedule of all program activities, field trips, community service learning activities and any other special events will be included on a calendar and distributed to families on a regular basis. TOP follows the Caswell County Schools operating schedule. TOP does not have regular sessions on days that Caswell County Schools are closed for teacher workdays, holidays, or inclement weather. The program will not operate on Early Release Days. If a special activity is planned during one of these days, you will receive notification. If Caswell County Schools close early due to inclement weather, TOP will not meet on that day. Please be sure to make other arrangements for your teens during these times.

7. PERSONAL ITEMS

The program staff cannot be responsible for the safety or care of personal belongings unless the teen requests the item be placed in lockable storage (if available). Lost and found items will be placed near the check-in table for one week. If items are not claimed, they will be given to a worthy cause.

8. HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES

All participants must have a completed health information form on file before the teen begins attending the program. No prescription or nonprescription drug or medication shall be administered to any teen without written authorization and specific instructions from a physician and the teen's parent/guardian. Staff will not administer any medication or sunscreen to participants unless they have received the substances in an appropriately labeled container. A medication log will be kept on file for all medications administered. **All medications will be locked up.**

In case of accidental injury or an emergency health problem, we will first make an immediate attempt to contact the parent/guardian, then the emergency contacts (listed in the teen's file). Until the arrival of the parent/guardian, the staff will be in charge according to the emergency procedure plan. In case of serious accident or severe illness requiring hospitalization or emergency treatment, your teen will be taken to the emergency room of the nearest hospital.

9. NUTRITION

A variety of nutritious snacks will be provided. Allowances for food allergies will be considered, when possible, if written notification is received from parent/guardian.

10. YOUTH RIGHTS POLICY

Policy Statement: All children and youth participating in the Caswell County Partnership for Children Afterschool Programs have certain rights and responsibilities that must be conveyed to them and recognized by staff. Any child may initiate grievance procedures if they feel that these rights have been violated. If a child fails to accept responsibility and violates the program's rules, then they are subject to established disciplinary procedures.

Code of Conduct: To ensure the safety and well being of all program participants and staff, each child will be responsible for following the Code of Conduct and will be expected at all times to:

- ** Remember that they, alone, are responsible for their own actions and personal belongings.
- ** Follow the rules, procedures, schedules, and directions of staff while in the program.
- ** Be courteous and respect other children, volunteers, and staff during the program.
- ** Respect property and facilities in which classes and activities are held.
- ** Be on time for programs, events and activities, and remain on the premises and with the group at all times. Parents should communicate transportation needs and/or changes in writing to program staff.
- ** If a problem with another individual develops, the child will try to help form a solution that will be acceptable to the benefit of both. If unable to do this peacefully, the child will alert program staff to the problem and ask for assistance in solving the problem.
- ** Each child has the responsibility of reporting any infringement of his/her rights to program staff. They are also responsible for following the grievance procedures in making any complaint, and of reporting to the Executive Director any action taken against them by any other child or staff member as a result of their complaint.

Any child who does not adhere to the CODE OF CONDUCT and places himself/herself or others in danger and/or jeopardizes the well being of others and the successful operation of the program is subject to dismissal from the program. Parents/Guardians may be called to pick up their child who does not comply with rules of good behavior whether at the program site or any other site.

Parents/guardians are required to sign the **Code of Conduct** as part of the application. Parents/guardians should review the **Code of Conduct** with their child.

Behavior and Discipline Standards and Management Policy: Staff will use positive discipline to promote the responsibility and self-image of each participant and to help children learn to manage their own behavior. Praise and positive reinforcement are effective methods of behavior management of children. When children receive positive, non-violent, and understanding interactions from adults, they learn to make good choices, develop strong and healthy consciences, and learn right from wrong. They also develop good self-concepts, problem-solving abilities, and self-discipline.

Program staff will:

- Praise, reward and encourage the children.
- Reason with and set limits for the children.
- Inform children of the rules, procedures, and schedules concerning the program.
- Model appropriate behavior for the children.
- Modify the environment to attempt to prevent problems before they occur.
- Listen to the children.
- Provide the children with natural and logical consequences of the behaviors.
- Treat the children as people and respect their needs, interests, and feelings.
- Treat the children respectfully, impartially, and fairly.
- Ignore minor misbehavior.
- Explain things to children on their level.
- Provide alternatives for inappropriate behavior to the children.
- Remain consistent in the behavior management policies and procedures.

Program Staff will NOT:

- Spank, shake, pinch, push, pull, slap or otherwise physically punish the children.
- Make fun of, yell at, threaten, make sarcastic remarks about, use profanity or otherwise verbally abuse the children.
- Leave the children alone, unattended, or without supervision.
- Allow discipline of children by children.
- Criticize, make fun of, or otherwise belittle children's parents, families or ethnic groups.
- Discriminate against any child because of race, religion, national origin, sex, physical handicap, or political belief.
- Permit harassment of any participant by any other participant or staff member.

Dismissal from the Program: Each participant is responsible for following the guidelines as outlined in the program handbook and as specified by the program staff during the orientation session. Throughout the program, each child will receive adequate instruction and proper supervision from knowledgeable, well trained staff. They will not be asked to do anything that is unsafe or unreasonable. The entire responsibility is NOT on the staff. The child will have responsibility for his/her safety and that of the group. Parents/guardians will be informed of any behavior that is deemed unacceptable for the safety and well being of the individual or the group. Due to the special needs for emotional and physical safety our programs require, repeated disruption will not be tolerated. Persistent misbehavior can be grounds for dismissal from the program. Use and/or possession of drugs, alcohol, tobacco, weapons or firearms, knives, and other items deemed dangerous is strictly forbidden. Fighting or bullying, and behavior that violates school rules or state or local laws are also strictly prohibited. Violation of this policy may result in immediate dismissal from the program. Program staff will also notify the appropriate entity (i.e. school, law enforcement, etc).

When a major incident occurs, an incident report will be completed and the parent/guardian will be notified. After two major incidents, it is within the discretion of the Program Staff and/or Executive Director to ask the participant to not return to the program. After each incident that occurs, the program staff will talk with the child about the inappropriate behavior and will discuss options for appropriate behavior. Parents/guardians should inquire about the behavior of their child in the program by stopping by before or after the program, scheduling a conference with the Program Staff, or by calling the Caswell County Partnership for Children office.

Program staff and/or the Executive Director may terminate a participant from the program at any time based on reasonable cause.

Grievance Policy and Procedures: Any child and/or his or her parent/guardian has the right to report any problems or complaints they have while in the program without fear of punishment. The following procedures should be followed to report a problem or complaint:

1. A written letter stating the concern or complaint should be submitted to the Program Staff.
2. If the child and/or parent/guardian is uncomfortable in reporting the concern or complaint to the Program Staff, the letter should be submitted to the Executive Director.
3. All reports will be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation.
4. The Program Staff will research the problem.
5. The Program Staff will notify the Executive Director of the concern or complaint, the result of the investigation, and the response to be provided.
6. A written response will be issued within 10 business days after receiving the concern/complaint.
7. If the child and/or parent/guardian is not satisfied with the response received from the Program Staff, he or she may present his/her concern or complaint in writing to the Executive Director.
8. The Executive Director will research the issue further and provide a written response within 10 business days after receiving the concern/complaint.
9. If the child and/or parent/guardian is not satisfied with this response, he or she may present his/her concern or complaint to the Youth Committee for resolution, at the next scheduled meeting.
10. The decision made by the Youth Committee will be final.

11. PROGRAM TRANSPORTATION AND FIELD TRIP TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is provided by a contracted transportation vendor selected by CCPFC.

The parent/guardian must sign a permission form for each field trip that their teen plans to attend.

Program staff accompanies and supervise the teens on all field trips. They are responsible for:

1. Providing appropriate supervision to ensure that each teen remains seated while being transported and keeps his/her body parts inside the vehicle.
2. Making sure no teen is left unattended.
3. Checking to make sure each teen is accounted for while traveling to, during, and returning from the field trip, through a multi-check system.
4. Ensuring that a first-aid kit and emergency information are available for emergency use.
5. Notifying the appropriate emergency response organization and parent/guardian in case of an emergency and administering proper first aid until help arrives.

If there is an accident or problem that results in the van/bus returning later than expected, the program staff will notify parents/guardians and/or a notice will be placed at the program site.

Teens will be expected to act courteously and respect volunteers and program staff during activities and trips, and to follow their instructions and guidelines. Their behavior should reflect concern for their own personal safety and well-being as well as that of the entire group. Teens will be expected to follow the transportation rules listed below. The parent/guardian is expected to review these rules with their teen. Staff will also periodically review the rules with the teens.

TRANSPORTATION RULES

1. No eating or drinking on vans.
2. No smoking on vans.
3. No profanity.
4. Respect the van driver.
5. Passengers need to be sure that they have good hygiene.
6. Passengers must wear seatbelts.
7. The driver cannot deviate from the information that the agency provides to the transportation department.

8. Any behavior that endangers the safety of the passengers and driver will not be tolerated on the van.
9. No disruptive behavior on the van will be tolerated.
10. No alcohol will be allowed on the van at any time.
11. No concealed weapons on the van.
12. All passengers are to remain seated while the van is in motion.

ANY VIOLATION OF THESE RULES MAY RESULT IN SUSPENSION OF TRANSPORTATION PRIVILEGES OR POSSIBLY TERMINATION OF TRANSPORTATION PRIVILEGES.

The following discipline procedures have been established for those teens than violate transportation rules:

- **1st Offense - Verbal warning given to the teen, with a disciplinary note sent to the parent/guardian and a follow-up phone call to the parent/guardian.**
- **2nd Offense - Teen will be suspended from using the transportation van.**

The program and transportation staff will decide on the length of the suspension. For repeat, serious (fighting, seat belt violations, etc.) or other incidents, as determined by the program staff, permanent suspension may result from violating the rules.

For any problem or concern regarding transportation services, parents should contact the program staff. Parents should provide as much information as possible regarding any transportation issue (i.e. driver name, children involved in incident, and any other details that will assist the program staff in researching the problem). Program staff will investigate any concerns and follow-up with the parent making the request.

12. VOLUNTEERING IN THE PROGRAM

Parents are encouraged to become involved in the program and will be asked to volunteer in the program. Please be willing to volunteer when your schedule permits.

In order to ensure the safety and well being of all children participating in the program, all volunteers, including parents/guardians who wish to volunteer, must complete an application packet that includes an application and authorization to release information form. Completed forms should be submitted to the program staff or turned in to CCPFC. Our policies require that we conduct background screenings and reference checks on all potential volunteers. Volunteers will be notified in writing if they have been approved to serve as volunteers and the date for when they are eligible to begin volunteering in the program. CCPFC will provide an orientation to each volunteer and maintain a record of all volunteer services.

In addition, parents/guardians are encouraged to participate in the parenting programs offered during the year.

The Can We Talk? program is a parenting workshop that helps parents develop the skills to more effectively communicate their values to their children. Parents find out what their children are learning in school, from their friends, and from the media, and how to use this information to make conversations with their children non-confrontational and ongoing.

The Parents Matter! Program encourages parents to talk to their children about adolescent health issues. The program helps parents improve their skills and increase their comfort level when talking to their children about pregnancy prevention, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and HIV/AIDS. The program provides opportunities for parents to build positive parenting skills, improve parent-child communication, and strengthen relationships with their children.