

2025-26 PARTICIPANT & FAMILY HANDBOOK



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Welcome Message

We are thrilled to welcome you and your family to the Girls Inc. of Chattanooga community! This handbook outlines the policies and procedures that help us maintain high-quality, inclusive, and empowering experiences for every participant. We encourage families to review this handbook carefully and reach out with any questions. Thank you for partnering with us as we work together to build a brighter future for girls in our community.



Contact us :



423-269-7410



www.girlsincofchatt.org



4315 Brainerd Rd.
Chattanooga, TN 37411



Who We Are

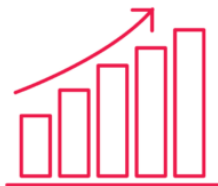
Vision: Provide every girl with the tools to be her whole-self today and tomorrow.

Mission: Inspire and equip all girls to be strong, smart, and bold through intentional opportunities and experiences.



48

Program partners in schools & community



75%

Growth in girls reached from 2022



3,000+

Unique girls served ages 6-18



Nondiscrimination Policy

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga is committed to providing an inclusive, equitable, and welcoming environment for all participants, families, staff, and volunteers. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, age, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law.

All participants are welcomed and supported in our programs, and we strive to create a space where every girl can grow, thrive, and feel safe being herself.

Confidentiality and Privacy Policy

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all participants and families. All personal information collected—whether through registration, communication, or support services—is the exclusive property of Girls Inc. of Chattanooga stored securely and used solely for program-related purposes. Staff who violate the Confidential Information clauses of the GIC Employee Handbook will face disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Information will not be shared with outside parties unless required by law or with written consent from the parent or guardian. Girls Inc. of Chattanooga values our participants' privacy. We will not photograph, record, or publicly share images of any participant unless a signed media consent form is on file.

Families who do not wish for their participant to be photographed or included in promotional materials must indicate this preference during the registration process by declining Media Consent, if you are unsure of your participants media consent status or want to change their status, please call 423-269-7410 or email programs@girlsincofchatt.org.

ADA/Special Accommodation Policy

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and applicable state and local laws governing nondiscrimination in programs and services. We are committed to making reasonable accommodations to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to our facilities, activities, and services.

Families are encouraged to notify staff during the registration process or at any time if a participant requires specific accommodations. We will work collaboratively to meet the individual needs of each participant to the best of our ability.

Registration Policy

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga operates on a first-come, first-served basis for all program enrollment. In order to secure a spot, participants must be fully registered through the Girls Inc. Parent Portal, which can be accessed via the Programs page on our official website.

www.girlsincofchatt.org

Only participants with completed registration forms on file through the portal will be eligible to attend programs. We encourage families to register early, as space is limited.

For assistance navigating the Girls Inc. of Chattanooga website, parent portal or payment system please email programs@girlsincofchatt.org or call us at 423-269-7410.

Family & Community Collective

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga is committed to supporting the whole family through the Family Community Collective Program (FCC). All households with participants enrolled in at least one Girls Inc. of Chattanooga program, including seasonal camps, afterschool programs, and in-school programs.

Resources provided by the FCC are designed to benefit the whole family through:

- Educational support and free workshops
- Economic support
- Counseling and mediation referrals
- Emergency needs and preparedness
- Family Resource Center and Boutique

Our Family Resource Center provides Girls Inc. families with access to essential items and exciting opportunities including:

- Non-perishable food
- Clothing
- Hygiene products
- Support for other critical needs
- Dream Room Sweepstakes
- Prom and event based shopping experiences

We aim to help meet the basic needs of our families so that girls can thrive in and out of our programs. Please call 423-264-4757 to schedule access to our Family Resource Center.

Afterschool Payment Policy

At Girls Inc. of Chattanooga, we are committed to providing high-quality, engaging, and empowering out of school experiences for all participants. To ensure clarity and consistency for our families, we have outlined the following payment policy regarding registration, deposits, refunds, and payment deadlines. Please review this information carefully so that you are fully informed about our procedures and expectations. Your understanding and cooperation help us maintain equitable access and operational efficiency for all program participants.

Waitlisted families do not pay anything unless they are moved off the waitlist.

Afterschool Membership dues must be paid by the last Monday of October for the fall semester and the last Monday in March for the spring semester. Afterschool memberships are priced at \$50 per participant in elementary school and \$25 per participant in middle school. Additional fees may apply for supplementary programs, such as Dance and Cheer.

If the membership dues and program fees are not received by the deadlines listed above, the participants will not be permitted to register for new memberships or attend Girls Inc. programming until the balance is paid in full.

All invoices will be sent directly to parents/guardians via Quickbooks. Reminders will be sent out in the following manner:

- Parents/guardians will receive 1 week notice via email.
- Parents/guardians will receive a 3-day notice via text

There will be a 20% administrative fee deducted from all refunds because GIC is charged again when we refund the money. For example, if the refund is \$50.00, the parent/guardian/payor will only receive a \$40.00 refund because \$10.00 will be deducted as an administrative fee to GIC.

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga does not accept cash payments or personal checks.

Camp Payment Policy

At Girls Inc. of Chattanooga, we are committed to providing high-quality, engaging, and empowering camp experiences for all participants. To ensure clarity and consistency for our families, we have outlined the following payment policy regarding registration, deposits, refunds, and payment deadlines. Please review this information carefully so that you are fully informed about our procedures and expectations. Your understanding and cooperation help us maintain equitable access and operational efficiency for all program participants.

Within 2 business days of camp registration, parents/guardians will receive one invoice per session (fall, spring, or summer). If there are multiple participants attending the invoice will show a line item for each participants membership and program fees.

Waitlisted families do not pay anything unless they are moved off the waitlist.

A Seasonal Camp Membership fee of \$25 must be paid within 48 hours of receiving the invoice to reserve the participants spot, membership fees are non-refundable.

If the camp deposit is not received within 48 hours of receiving the invoice, the participants will lose their spot, and parents will need to re-register to place themselves on the waitlist.

The full payment is due 1 week before the start of each individual seasonal camp and is listed on the invoice.

If the camp payment is not received in full 1 week before the start of camp the participant will lose their spot and the family will be refunded any payments made except for the \$25 non-refundable deposits made on each camp for each individual participant.

All invoices will be sent directly to parents/guardians via Quickbooks. Reminders will be sent out in the following manner:

- Parents/guardians will receive 1 week notice via email.
- Parents/guardians will receive a 3-day notice via text

There will be a 20% administrative fee deducted from all refunds because GIC is charged again when we refund the money. For example, if the refund is \$50.00, the parent/guardian/payor will only receive a \$40.00 refund because \$10.00 will be deducted as an administrative fee to GIC.

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga does not accept cash payments or personal checks.

Transportation Policy

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga is proud to offer transportation services to support participation in our programs. To ensure a safe and respectful experience for all riders, the following policies apply:

- Following all directions given by Girls Inc. staff and drivers
- Maintaining appropriate behavior (language, no hitting, at all times)
- Keeping the vehicle clean and free of trash or damage
- Respecting other riders and staff

Any participant who violates these expectations may be subject to suspension or permanent removal from Girls Inc. transportation services. Continued disregard for safety or behavioral expectations may also result in removal from programming.

Transportation for afterschool programming is available only for select schools. To register a participant for afterschool transportation:

- Parents/guardians must contact Girls Inc. of Chattanooga to confirm availability.
- Parents/guardians must also notify the participant's school to authorize bus pickup by Girls Inc.

Please note that transportation is not guaranteed and is assigned based on availability and eligibility. All participants must have a permission slip for **all** travel. For questions about transportation availability from your child's school, please contact our Program Office directly at 423-269-7410.

Custody Policy

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga is a neutral organization and will not become involved in custody disputes. We will follow only legal custody arrangements that are on file with our program team.

In the event of conflicting claims, the organization will require official documentation (e.g., court orders) and may consult legal counsel before taking further action to ensure the safety of the child.

Attendance Policy

Consistent attendance is essential for participants to receive the full benefit of the Girls Inc. of Chattanooga experience. In order to maintain accurate records and ensure participant safety:

Parents/guardians are required to notify Girls Inc. staff if their child will not be attending on any scheduled program day. If a participant is absent for two consecutive weeks without communication, they will:

- Become ineligible to attend field trips.
- Risk losing their spot in the program to a participant on the waiting list.

To avoid this, we strongly encourage timely communication with staff via phone, email, or written notice.

Additionally, participants who do not attend their regular school due to disciplinary action or illness are not permitted to attend Girls Inc. afterschool programs on that day.

Pick-up Policy

All participants must be picked up by the end of their scheduled program time. For Afterschool Programs, the pick-up window ends promptly at 6:00 PM, and for Camps, the pick-up window ends at 5:30 PM, unless otherwise stated.

Only individuals listed on the approved pick-up form are permitted to pick up participants. If someone new will be picking up your child, parents or guardians must call ahead to notify staff. A valid photo ID will be required at pick-up to confirm the individual's identity and ensure it matches the approved name on file.

Late pick-ups are subject to fines as outlined in the Late Payment Policy on the following page.

For Afterschool Programs, parents and guardians are required to sign participants out at the front table each day. For Camps, dismissal is conducted through a car-rider style system for efficiency and safety.

Consistent adherence to these procedures helps ensure the safety and well-being of all participants.

Late Pick Up Policy & Procedure

Participants must be picked up by the time the site closes, 5:30 pm for seasonal camps and 6:00pm for afterschool programs.

If an emergency arises and you are unable to reach the site by close, please let us know when we can expect your participants to be picked up. We will notify the Department of Children's Services or the police when participants are left in a program without notification from families and when no contacts can be reached to pick up the participant.

Each center follows these guidelines in response to a late pick up:

1. If family is late for pick up, immediately after the site closes staff will try to contact the parents to determine arrival time. If the parents are not reachable, staff will notify the participants emergency contacts to arrange pick up.
2. If the family and emergency contacts cannot be reached within 30 minutes, staff will notify the local police or children's services for assistance.
3. A late fee is charged. This fee is \$1 for every minute the parent is late, payments must be completed before the participant can return to Girls Inc. programming.
4. If your child is picked up late on three occasions, your child's participation in the program may be suspended or terminated.

We will follow these steps:

- 1st time late: The Program Supervisor reinforces the closing time and documents the late pick up. Staff reinforce late pick up policy and give the family a copy of Late Policy.
- 2nd time late: Staff will provide written notification about being late, listing the 1st and 2nd time being late on the notification form. The Manager of Programs will be notified. The MOP will contact the family either by phone or in person to solve problems and to ensure that it does not happen again.
- 3rd time late: The Manager of Programs will notify the Sr. Director of Programming. The family will be contacted, and a meeting will be set up to discuss the next steps. (may include suspension or termination from program).

Late pick up policy is strictly followed and enforced.

Program Closure Policy

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga follows the Hamilton County Schools calendar for closures. If Hamilton County Schools are closed, our programs will also be closed.

This includes all scheduled school closures, holidays, and emergency closures such as inclement weather.

Families will be notified of any program closures through email communication. Please ensure that we have your most up-to-date contact information on file so that you receive these important updates in a timely manner.

Incident Report Policy and Procedure

Our top priority is to ensure the immediate safety of our participants, staff, and volunteers. Documentation of an incident will only happen once the incident is contained, and all parties are safe. Incident reports are expected to be completed as soon as possible and in no more than 24 hours. Below are the staffs guidelines for reporting an incident.

A **Level One Incident** is one that requires the support of a single GIC staff member or volunteer. Level One Incidents do not require further communication with additional parties. These do not require the completion of an incident report.

Examples include:

- Small scrapes that do not require first-aid
- Participants complaining of a headache, but do not need to go home
- Verbal arguments that are quickly defused by a staff member or volunteer

A **Level Two Incident** is one that requires communication with a parent/guardian and potentially more than one GIC staff member or volunteer. Parents/guardians will receive an incident report at this level. Examples include:

- Scrapes and cuts that require first-aid
- Illness or fever that requires going home
- Being involved in a verbal fight that is not quickly defused
- Being involved in a physical fight
- Any instances of bullying

A **Level Three Incident** is one that could require medical attention and requires communication with parents/guardians. Parents/guardians will receive an incident report at this level. Examples include:

- Scrapes, cuts, or sprains requiring first-aid and a parent/guardian pick up
- Allergic reaction, asthma attacks, choking or nosebleeds
- Bullying that results in trauma or physical harm
- Fights that result in physical harm
- Participants disclosing previous desires for self-harm or suicidal ideation with no plans

A **Level Four Incident** is one that requires medical attention and may result in the participant going to the hospital for further care. These require immediate communication with program leadership, who will involve executive GIC leadership. Parents/guardians will receive an incident report at this level. Examples include:

- Scrapes or cuts resulting in severe bleeding
- Sprains preventing mobility
- Injuries requiring emergency services
- Allergic reactions requiring epi-pens, life threatening choking, or head injuries
- Threat including a plan to cause harm to person(s) or property is named
- Fights resulting in major physical harm, which potentially spreads to multiple participants
- Disclosure of active desires for self-harm or suicidal ideation, participant has a plan and should not be left unattended
- Participant is suspected to be or is actively under the influence of illegal drugs, prescription drugs, or alcohol

Please review the Incident Report on the next page for an example of the form parents/guardians will receive if there is a Level Two or above incident. Additionally, please review the Behavioral Agreement policy for disciplinary actions taken in response to participant led incidences.

Behavioral Expectation Agreement

At Girls Inc. of Chattanooga, we believe every girl deserves a safe, respectful, and encouraging environment. We expect all participants to help us create a space where everyone can feel supported, build strong relationships, and thrive.

Please review the following prohibited behaviors and accompanying action plan.

The following behaviors will result in a parent/guardian conference, either over the phone or face-to-face, with the participants Program Coordinator.

- Bullying, name-calling, teasing, or threatening other participants or staff.
- Interrupting others during scheduled activities, programming time, or field trips.
- Refusal to participate in scheduled activities, programming time, or field trips.
- Stealing from others or not returning program supplies.
- Speaking rudely to staff, volunteers, or other participants.
- Using inappropriate language, cursing, or having inappropriate discussions with others.
- Vandalism of Girls Inc. of Chattanooga property, or other property during Girls Inc. field trips.
- Refusal to listen to direction from Girls Inc. staff.

The following behaviors will result in a minimum of a 2-day suspension and a parent/guardian conference with the participants Program Coordinator and program leadership.

- Physically fighting with staff, volunteers, or other participants.
- Use or possession of medicine without consent of parents or Girls Inc. of Chattanooga staff.
- Inappropriate use of internet on Girls Inc. devices and/or personal devices while at Girls Inc.

The following behaviors will result in expulsion for the remainder of the program session or permanent removal from Girls Inc. of Chattanooga programs.

- Physically fighting with staff, volunteers, or other participants.
- Possession of weapons.
- Use or sale of drugs and/or alcohol.

Please note that while this agreement outlines our core behavioral expectations, Girls Inc. of Chattanooga staff reserve the right to document and address behaviors not explicitly listed if they interfere with the safety, learning, or well-being of others.

Parents/guardians will receive a copy of any behavior or incident report at dismissal on the day of the occurrence. A blank copy of the Behavior/Incident Report is provided on the following page for your reference.

COMPUTER, EMAIL & INTERNET USE POLICY

The following uses of computers, email accounts, or the Internet provided by Girls Inc. of Chattanooga are unacceptable:

Uses that violate any state or federal law or municipal ordinance are unacceptable. Unacceptable uses include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Selling or purchasing any illegal substances;
2. Accessing, transmitting, or downloading child or adult pornography, obscene depictions, harmful materials, or materials that encourages others to violate the law; or
3. Transmitting or downloading confidential information or materials that violate federal copyright laws.

Uses that involve the accessing, transmitting, or downloading of inappropriate matters on the Internet, as determined by Girls Inc. of Chattanooga.

Uses that involve obtaining and or using unauthorized free or free-mail email sites as defined by Girls Inc. of Chattanooga.

Uses that can cause harm to others or damage to their property are unacceptable. Unacceptable uses include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Deleting, copying, modifying, or forging other users' emails, files, or data;
2. Accessing another user's email without their permission, and as a result of that accessing, reading or forwarding the other user's emails or files without that person's permission;
3. Damaging computer equipment, files, or data;
4. Using profane, abusive, or impolite language;
5. Disguising one's identity, impersonating other users, or sending anonymous email messages;
6. Threatening, harassing, or making defamatory or false statements about others;
7. Accessing, transmitting, or downloading offensive, harassing, or disparaging materials;
8. Accessing, transmitting, or downloading computer viruses or other harmful files or programs, or in any way degrading or disrupting any computer system performance;
9. Accessing, transmitting, or downloading large files, including "chain letters" or any type of "pyramid schemes"; or
10. Using any Girls Inc. of Chattanooga computer to pursue hacking, internal or external to Girls Inc. of Chattanooga, or attempting to access information that is protected by privacy laws.

Uses that jeopardize access or lead to unauthorized access into computers, email accounts, and Internet access are unacceptable. Unacceptable uses include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Using other members/non members' account passwords or identifiers;
2. Disclosing one's account passwords to other members/non members or allowing other members/non members to use one's accounts;
3. Getting unauthorized access into another member's/non member's accounts; or
4. Interfering with other members'/non members' ability to access their accounts.

Commercial uses are unacceptable. Unacceptable includes but is not limited to the following:

1. Selling or buying anything over the Internet for personal financial gain;
2. Using the Internet for advertising, promotion, or financial gain; or
3. Conducting for-profit business activities and engaging in non-government related fundraising or public relations activities such as solicitation for religious purposes, lobbying for political purposes, or soliciting votes

Medical Emergencies and Medicinal Management

The health and safety of our participants is a top priority at Girls Inc. of Chattanooga. To ensure proper care, the following guidelines apply to all program participants:

Medical Emergencies

In the event of a medical emergency, Girls Inc. staff will contact parents or guardians immediately. If the situation is life-threatening or requires urgent medical attention, staff will call 911 and may administer CPR or First Aid as trained and appropriate.

For minor incidents such as scrapes, bumps, or minor cuts requiring a bandage or ice pack, staff will provide basic first aid. In these cases, families will receive a written Incident Report at dismissal to keep them informed.

Medicinal Management

Girls Inc. staff must have written parental or guardian consent in order to administer any type of medication, including prescription or over-the-counter drugs.

Participants are not permitted to self-administer medication while at Girls Inc. programs. All medications must be turned in to staff and administered according to documented instructions.

Lost & Found Policy

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga encourages all participants to keep personal belongings labeled and stored safely. Please note the following:

- Girls Inc. is not responsible for lost, damaged, or stolen items.
- Items that are found will be placed in the program's Lost and Found area.
- Lost items will be held for two (2) weeks. After this period, unclaimed items will be discarded or donated.

We encourage families to check the Lost and Found regularly and remind participants to take care of their belongings.

Emergency Preparedness Policy

At Girls Inc. of Chattanooga, the safety of our participants and staff is our highest priority. To ensure we are prepared for unexpected situations, we have established emergency procedures and conduct regular safety drills as part of our emergency preparedness plan.

Emergency Procedures

Girls Inc. of Chattanooga has protocols in place for the following emergencies:

- Unsafe building conditions
- Injury or illness
- Fire or smoke
- Emergency evacuation due to fire, explosions or severe weather
- Inclement weather such as high winds or tornado, flooding, lightning, or hailstorm either on site or in transit with staff or participants
- Power or water outage
- Bomb threats
- Lockdown from threats outside of the building
- Lockdown from threats inside the building
- Acts of violence
- Suspicious mail or packages
- Chemical release or spills

In the event of an actual emergency, Girls Inc. staff will follow our established protocols, which may include evacuating the building, sheltering in place, or initiating a lockdown. Staff are trained to lead participants safely through these procedures and will notify parents/guardians as soon as it is safe to do so.

Safety Drills

To help participants and staff respond calmly and effectively in emergencies, safety drills are conducted regularly as follows:

Afterschool Programs: Safety drills will take place at 4:30pm on the first Wednesday and Thursday of each month.

Seasonal Camps: Safety drills will take place at 10:00am on the first Tuesday of each camp session.

Drills will include:

- Fire Drills
- Lockdown Drills
- Tornado Drills

These drills will rotate monthly to ensure participants are familiar with all types of emergency procedures. By practicing regularly, we aim to ensure that every girl feels confident, calm, and safe should a real emergency arise.

Mandatory Reporting Policy

At Girls Inc. of Chattanooga, the safety and well-being of every participant is our highest priority. As part of that commitment, we strictly adhere to all state and federal laws regarding mandatory reporting of suspected abuse or neglect.

All Girls Inc. staff, volunteers, and interns are considered mandatory reporters. This means they are legally required to report any suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a child to the proper authorities, regardless of whether the abuse is confirmed or only suspected.

Reports are made to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) or appropriate law enforcement agencies, and may be made without prior notice to the child's parent or guardian, in accordance with the law.

Mandatory reporters must report any concerns involving:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse or exploitation
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect or abandonment
- Unsafe or dangerous living conditions

All reports are handled confidentially and with the utmost care. The identity of the reporter is protected under state law, and information is only shared with appropriate agencies involved in the investigation.