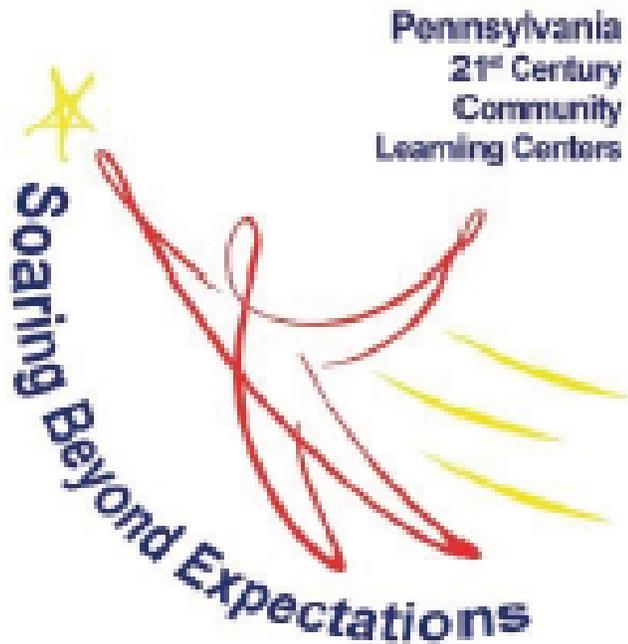


Independence Charter School
Nita M. Lowery
21st Century Community Learning
After School and Summer Program
Family Handbook



**Funded by Pennsylvania
Department of Education**

Welcome to our 21st Century educational programs. We are looking forward to a great year with you and your child at our 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) program. We hope that you will become fully involved in your child's education and recognize how our programs will benefit your child, you, and your entire family. The following information will help you to understand the operations of our site, the responsibilities of our site staff and your role in helping provide a quality experience for your child. Should you have any concerns regarding the program at any time, please feel free to contact one of our staff.

Contact Information:

Kelly Acuna
21st CCLC Site Coordinator
Email: kellya@icscharter.com

Odamis Fernandez-Sheinbaum
Assistant Principal
Email: odamisf@icscharter.com

Main Office
Phone Number: 215-238-8000
Fax Number: 215-238-1998

Mission Statement

The Independence Charter School 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) program is dedicated to enriching the educational, social and cultural opportunities of students and families who attend Independence Charter School.

Goal of the Program

The 21st CCLC program is held at Independence Charter School every afternoon during the schools operating calendar. A special summer program is available to students who qualify. The afternoon program hours are immediately after school until the students are released for pickup at 5:30 p.m. each afternoon of operation. All program activities are funded by a 21st CCLC competitive grant funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Education through the U.S. Department of Education. Therefore, all program services are provided to your child free of charge. The goal of the 21st CCLC Program is to provide the students and parents of Independence Charter School with an organized, educational, and recreationally oriented after-school, and summer programs for students. It is the intent of the program to ensure that the students are cared for in such a way it will be beneficial for both the parents and child.

Admission of Students

Students will be admitted using the following considerations and procedures:

1. Student must attend Independence Charter School or have CEO and/or principal recommendation that meet grant requirements.
2. Students scoring Basic or Below Basic on the PSSA will receive priority for admission to the program. Additionally, students academically at-risk as determined by report card grades, classroom performance, and teacher referral will receive priority consideration. All other available program admission slots are on a “first come – first serve” basis.
3. All required registration and admission paperwork is received by the program site. Any change to this information must be communicated to the Site Coordinator immediately so that current information is always on file. This is for the safety of your child.
4. Space availability.
5. Consideration of sibling participation.
6. Student’s ability to cooperate and work in small group settings, display appropriate behavior, and adhere to staff expectations.

Hours and Days of Operation

After-school program hours are 3:15 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Wednesday hours are 1:30 to 5:30 p.m. Typically the after school program begins the week after Labor Day and ends the last week of school. Students are dismissed from their individual classrooms to the cafeteria and meet program staff. The program does not operate on school vacation days, on days of early release for threat of inclement weather or days of school cancellation for inclement weather.

Summer enrichment program hours are 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Monday thru Friday. Breakfast is available at 8:30 a.m. and Lunch at 12:00 p.m.

Enrollment Forms

A complete set of enrollment forms must be on file before your child may stay for the 21st CCLC program. These forms include, but are not limited to, the enrollment form and the medical release form. No child will be allowed to stay for any reason unless the forms are signed and dated. It is the parents’ responsibility to notify Site Coordinator and 21st CCLC staff of any changes. These changes would include change of address, change of contact numbers, change in those persons authorized for pick-up, and changes in family arrangements.

Orientation

Upon completion of required paperwork, a staff member is available to sit down with the parent and/or student to review paperwork, go through the Program handbook, provide an overview of the program, and give a tour of the facility if desired. This should be arranged with the site coordinator.

Attendance Policy

If your child is enrolled in the 21st CCLC program, he/she is expected to attend each program day. If a child is absent, we will make every attempt to determine why the child is not present. It is for your child's safety and your peace of mind that we do this. If your child is going to be absent, please call the school office and ask that the Site Coordinator be notified.

***In order for students to benefit from the 21st Century After School Program, regular and consistent attendance is required. Regular and consistent attendance is defined as attending, on average, four of the five scheduled days every week, unless ill or other unavoidable conflict.

The program site serves a limited number of students. There may be a waiting list for students who qualify for the program. If a student is not going to attend regularly, that "spot" needs to be made available to the students on the waiting list.

Research done on 21st CCLC programs indicate that students who attend regularly experience much more academic and behavioral benefits than those whose attendance is irregular.

Scheduling

Students who participate in the after-school program are provided with 15-30 minutes per day for homework assistance and/or tutoring. Enrichment classes will be offered weekly at each site. All tutoring sessions are conducted by certified teachers, or other program staff directly supervised by certified teachers.

All Volunteers not regularly employed Independence Charter School of the 21st CCLC Site will have criminal and child abuse background checks as required by PA State law.

Dismissal/Release of Students

1. Pick up may ONLY be made by authorized parties. Permission MUST be in writing and signed by the legal parent or guardian on the Registration Form that is completed on the first day of program attendance, or previously.
2. At pick up time, the parent, guardian, or authorized person MUST inform program staff that they are picking up the student, and the student must say "goodbye" to staff.
3. If an emergency should arise and you should need to take your child from school before the close of day, we would appreciate it if you would notify office staff that your child attends the after-school or summer program.
4. In the event of illness, or other absences, please notify the 21st CCLC program staff if at all possible.
5. Staff will not release children to anyone, including parents, who appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Emergency contacts will be called to transport the child home. The after-school program ends exactly at 5:30 pm. Please be on time! Parents should arrange for an authorized back-up person to pick up their child in the event of lateness or an emergency.

Chronically late pick-ups create hardships on the program staff and could result in our inability to continue serving your child. Parents are strongly encouraged not to pick up their child before 5:00 pm. This will allow sufficient time for full participation in the program.

Supervision Policy

All students served in the 21st CCLC program will be supervised at all times by appropriate staff.

After School Program: Appropriate staff members will meet students in designated areas at 3:00 p.m. to begin the daily schedule.

Supervision: Students may run errands inside the building or use the restroom alone or in groups of no more than six children without adult supervision as long as the following conditions are met: children are within hearing distance of a staff member, the staff checks on the students at least every 5 minutes until they return and the restroom is for exclusive use of the program.

Custody Agreements: If there are custody issues involving your child, you must provide the center with court papers at the time of registration indicating who has permission to pick up the child. The center may not deny a parent access to their child without proper documentation. If custody changes, the parent is required to notify the center and provide a copy of the changes.

Child Abuse Reporting: All staff members are trained and mandated reporters of child abuse. If staff members have suspicions that a child is being abused or neglected, they MUST make a report to the local children's services agency. The safety of the students is always our first concern.

Transportation of Children: The center or staff members will NOT transport a child. If a child requires transportation, the parent and/or 911 will be contacted.

Snacks

A snack that meets the Smart Snack Guidelines will be provided each day. Please include any food allergies on your child's enrollment form. Medically prescribed diets for a child enrolled in the program shall be provided as ordered by a physician. Such diets shall be on file and adhered to in preparation and service.

Accidents/Emergencies:

The school has devised several procedures to follow in the event that an emergency would occur while a child is in the care of 21st CCLC staff. In the event of a fire or other incident that requires evacuation of the building, staff will follow the written instructions posted in the school. The instructions describe emergency evacuation routes and the procedures to be followed to assure that children have arrived at the designated spot. In order to prepare children for the unlikely need to evacuate, the 21st CCLC staff does conduct periodic fire drills. Parents will be contacted as soon as possible to come to pick up your child. If a parent cannot be reached, we will contact the emergency contacts as listed on your child's enrollment

information. In the unlikely event there would be an environmental threat or a threat of violence, the staff will: secure the children in the safest location possible; contact and follow the directions given by the proper authorities; and contact the parents as soon as the situation allows. An incident report would also be provided to the parents.

In the case of a minor accident/injury, staff will administer basic first aid. If the injury/illness is more serious, first aid will be administered and the parents will be contacted immediately to assist in deciding an appropriate course of action. If any injury/illness is life threatening, the EMS will be contacted, parents will be notified, and a staff member will accompany the child to the hospital with all available school health records.

Staff will not transport children in staff owned vehicles. Only parents or EMS will transport.

An incident/injury report will be completed and given to the person picking up the child on the day of the incident/injury, if any of the following occur: the child has an illness, accident, or injury which requires first aid; the child receives a bump or blow to the head; the child has to be transported by emergency squad; or an unusual or unexpected event occurs which jeopardizes the safety of the child. All School policies and procedures regarding injury shall be followed, with appropriate reporting.

Management of Illness:

The 21st CCLC site provides children with a clean and healthy environment. A child with any of the following symptoms will be sent to Main Office and parent or emergency contact notified (please note we do not have a school nurse during 21st CCLC programs):

- Temperature of 100+ degrees F – in combination with other signs of illness
- Persistent Diarrhea
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Redness on the eye, obvious discharge, matted eyelashes, burning, itching
- Untreated skin patches, unusual spots or rashes
- Unusually dark urine or grey/white stools
- Stiff neck with an elevated temperature
- Vomiting more than once or when accompanied by any other sign of illness
- Sore throat or difficulty swallowing

Any child demonstrating signs of illness not listed above will be carefully observed for symptoms. The parent will be notified. If a child does not feel well enough to participate in activities, the parent will be called to pick up the child. Anytime a child is isolated, they will be kept within sight and hearing of a staff member.

Medications: The center will administer medications to a child only with written parental request. Medications will be stored in a designated area inaccessible to the children. Medications may NOT be stored in a child's bookbag. The only exception to this requirement is

for children who require the immediate use of an inhaler for a medical condition. Parents must sign a release stating that they are permitting their child to have access at all times to the inhaler.

Prescription medications must be in their original container and administered in accordance with instructions on the label. Over-the-counter medications must also be administered in accordance with label instructions. If parents request any different dosages or uses, a physician must provide written instructions. Over-the-counter medications will not be administered for more than three consecutive days without instructions from a physician.

Outdoor Play

Research has shown that children stay healthier when they have daily outdoor play. Based on this information and state requirements, outdoor play will be included in our program on a daily basis. We will limit the amount of time outside when the temperatures are very warm or very cold. If the situation requires, we will adjust outdoor time due to rain, threatening weather, warning, etc. Please send your children with the proper clothing so they may be comfortable and safe whenever we are outside. This includes hats, mittens, and boots in the winter time.

Parent Participation

Parents are encouraged to participate whenever possible in the activities at the center. Parents have access to all areas of the building used for activities during hours of operation but should check in with main office to be accompanied by a staff member. However, due to staff responsibilities and schedules, parents are asked to make appointments with staff when it is necessary to engage in any lengthy conversations. Scheduled appointments allow the staff to focus on you and your child. If you have any concerns or questions at any time, please feel free to bring them to the appropriate staff member when they occur. Often problems can be addressed when they are little, before they grow into bigger issues. We want the relationship between you and the center to be positive. Parents are also encouraged to:

- Participate in appropriate activities & programs that support the education of their child.
- Get involved with the Parent Advisory Committee and help make program decisions.
- Make contact with other parents to encourage participation.
- Attend site-sponsored parent trainings and workshops.
- Help plan and participate in healthy activities as appropriate.

Additional Policies:

Dangerous Weapons – Zero Tolerance: Students shall not carry, conceal, possess, display, or use deadly weapons or look-alike weapons at school or the center. Offenders will be subject to disciplinary action and possible dismissal. Under no circumstances are concealed weapons permitted at school.

Zero Tolerance: The 21st CCLC Program at Independence Charter School has a Zero-Tolerance policy for incidents involving threats, weapons, harassment, and drugs, etc. Students will be disciplined according to the Independence Charter School Code of Conduct, which could include suspension and expulsion from school and dismissal from the 21st CCLC program.

Smoking and Tobacco Use: Independence Charter School is designated as a smoke-free environment. All employees, students, parents, and visitors are required by Pennsylvania law to refrain from smoking and/or using tobacco products anywhere on district and school property.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment is a form of misconduct that undermines the integrity of our programming. Sexual harassment refers to behavior which is not welcome, which is personally offensive, which debilitates morale, and which therefore interferes with the working or learning effectiveness of its victims and their peers. Individuals who experience sexual harassment should make it clear that such behavior is offensive to them and should promptly process a complaint with the site coordinator.

Telephones: The telephones are used for business purposes and is available to students for EMERGENCIES ONLY. Students are not called to the phone for messages or personal calls during program periods; however, messages can be given to students by staff members. Staff members will return calls to parents at their earliest opportunity. Please refer to the

Independence Charter School Student Handbook for regulations regarding cell phone use by students.

Safe School: Help keep our schools and learning centers safe! When you spot any activity that could hurt students or our center, please call the School Office M-F 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. to report the activity/situation. If you wish, you do not have to identify yourself when you call.

Title IX – Discrimination: In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD).

Personal Property: Personal property, such as balls, toys, games, etc., should be left at home. We cannot assume responsibility for such items. Children should not wear expensive watches or jewelry items. All electronic devices, including but not limited to video games, laser pointers, cell phones, etc., are prohibited.

Homework: Students will be assisted with homework as time allows. Unless special programming is taking place, students will have minimal time to work on homework each day. Homework may or may not be completed when the student leaves the school. It is the responsibility of the parent to check homework and assist with completion.

Internet Use: Students will have access to the Internet at the 21st CCLC program. Inappropriate use of the Internet will result in loss of privileges. Please refer to the Independence Charter School Student Handbook for details regarding appropriate use policies.

Confidential Information: All information about children and their families including all records will be handled as confidential information. Access to child and family records will be restricted to appropriate administrative and instructional personnel.

Playground Safety Rules:

The school playground will be used for recreational and physical activities and games. The same behavior rules and regulations to which students must adhere during regular school hours will be observed during the time the child is enrolled in the 21st CCLC learning program.

Responsibilities

Student responsibilities include:

1. taking care of equipment
2. cleaning up after activities
3. sharing equipment with each other
4. keeping hands and feet to themselves
5. using appropriate language
6. treating staff with respect
7. finish what they start
8. being responsible for all personal belongings
9. leaving all toy weapons and personal toys at home
10. obey all school rules while participating in the program

Parent responsibilities include:

1. being on time to pick children up
2. treating staff with respect
3. bringing concerns to staff
4. keeping up with policy changes
5. notifying staff of changes in enrollment information
6. informing staff of contagious illness
7. keeping child's records up to date
8. cooperating with staff on discipline matters
9. completing program surveys and questionnaires

Staff responsibilities include:

1. treating children and parents with respect due them
2. motivating the children
3. providing a safe, comfortable, and enriching environment
4. introducing students to new and innovative hands-on activities not available during the regular school day