

**girls
inc.**

Inspiring all girls to be
strong, smart, and bold

Parent Handbook



FUEL HER FIRE,
AND SHE WILL CHANGE THE WORLD.

Girls Inc. of Bay County
1100 Fountain Ave., Panama City, FL 32401
(850) 769-6703 Telephone
www.girlsincofbaycounty.org

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Our Locations

Main Center

1100 Fountain Ave.
Panama City, FL 32401
(850) 769-6703

Beach Center

300 Clara Ave.
Panama City Beach, FL 32407
(850) 588-8711

Connect With Us

Facebook
Instagram
www.girlsincofbaycounty.org

Welcome to Girls Inc. of Bay County

Dear Parents and Girls,

Thank you for choosing Girls Inc. of Bay County! Girls Inc. gives girls the right tools and support to succeed, including trained professionals who mentor and guide them in a safe, girls-only environment, peers who share their drive and aspirations, and research-based programming. At Girls Inc., girls learn to set and achieve goals, boldly confront challenges, resist peer pressure, see college as attainable, and explore nontraditional fields in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Today, girls continue to encounter significant obstacles to their well-being and success.

- 1 in 6 girls will not finish high school.
- 78% of girls are unhappy with their bodies by age 17.
- Over 1 in 20 teen girls becomes pregnant each year.
- 1 in 5 girls will be a victim of childhood sexual abuse.

We meet these challenges through the Girls Inc. Experience, which helps girls explore and celebrate their strengths, their voices, who they are today, and who they will become. The Six Essential Elements of the Girls Inc. Experience are:

1. A pro-girl and girls-only environment
2. Trusting, mentoring relationships
3. Holistic, compensatory, and intentional
4. Research-based curricula
5. Hands-on, interactive activities
6. Sustained exposure

Core Essential Services: The programming and services critical to achieving each area of priority outcomes for girls:

- **Healthy Living** activities and services that lead to achievement of Strong/Healthy outcomes
- **Academic Enrichment** and Support that lead to achievement of Smart/Educated outcomes
- **Life Skills Instruction** that leads to achievement of Bold/Independent outcomes

All of these program areas are implemented using structured and non-structured settings. Girls Inc. is dedicated to providing after school and summer programs that help build self-confidence and prepare each girl for the opportunities and responsibilities she will have as an adult. Girls Inc. is not only a fun place to be; it provides girls with a chance to learn about themselves and others.

In order for our program to run smoothly it's imperative that we all follow the same basic ground rules. Please read the following Girls Inc. handbook and keep it for future reference.

About Our Staff

Our dedicated, professional staff are very excited about the opportunity to help your daughter become STRONG, SMART, and BOLD! Our entire focus is to create a place and programs that empower girls to be all they can be. If you should have any questions or concerns about anything that happens at Girls Inc., we are here to help you to the best of our ability. Please bring your concerns directly to the office staff and center directors. **The program instructors have direct supervision responsibilities at all times so due to safety reasons parent conferences with program instructors are prohibited unless arranged by the center director.**

The management staff includes:

Niki Kelly, Executive Director
Denise Bragdon, Operations Director
Rebecca Nelson, Program Director
Jennifer Wilhelm, Development Director
Kelly Farr, Beach Site Supervisor

We also have many wonderful program instructors who plan and implement the programs your daughters participate in each day. These are committed individuals who touch your daughter's life every day.

We are very proud of our Program Instructors at Girls Inc. Their education and backgrounds are varied, but there are several things they all have in common. All of our Program Instructors believe in every girl's capacity to be **Strong, Smart and Bold**. They build successful relationships with each and every Girls Inc. member and present activities for learning that the girls will respond to and enjoy.

Our Program Instructors are not only teachers, but they are also role models. In short, Program Instructors help to change and mold future young women for tomorrow's ever-changing society.

- All Program Instructors are certified in CPR and First Aid.
- Local and FBI Background Checks are performed on all Staff.
- Girls Inc. is a drug free work place.
- Girls Inc. Program Instructors receive ongoing training to stay up to date in all topic areas.

Communication

We believe that communication and parent engagement are vital to a girl's success. We will attempt to share resources and updates with you in many ways. Follow us on Facebook for timely updates on program activities, events, and helpful resources. Check out our website or the bulletin board in our lobby for important updates, program announcements and policy changes. Information specific to your daughter will be provided directly to you either over the phone, in person, or in writing. Communication works best when it is a two-way street therefore we highly encourage you to communicate any of your questions, comments or concerns to us.



Financial Policies

Girls Inc. is able to provide services to you and your daughter(s) for a greatly reduced price BECAUSE of support from United Way, a strong Board of Directors who conduct multiple fundraisers each year to support the programs, our corporate sponsors, private donors, civic organizations, foundations, and YOU.....yes, YOU!

When registering for services you will be provided with a clear explanation of all fees due at that time. A payment plan can be established if needed. **MAKING ALL PAYMENTS ON TIME AND IN FULL** means that we have money to continue to operate for the next month. Allowing this bill to get behind makes it difficult for you to pay, and could cause your daughter(s) to be suspended and unable to attend.

If at any time you are two months or more behind in payments, Girls Inc. of Bay County may:

- A. Suspend your daughter's membership for a period of time to allow you to catch up on your fees, and
- B. your daughter cannot physically attend any of our programs or activities until the account is paid up to date.

Invoking this policy can be avoided by talking to the Executive Director or Operations Director regarding your account and your financial needs. If you have changes in your job, your income, or even your family situation, please let us know. We have tools that we can use to help you out in the short term, or work towards financially getting you back on track. Failure to talk about your financial situation only hurts you and your daughter.

1. PROGRAM FEES MUST BE PAID IN ACCORDANCE WITH MY PAYMENT PLAN in order for your daughter to be considered eligible to continue to attend. Failure to do so could result in your daughter being removed from the program.

2. A \$30 RETURN CHECK CHARGE that will be assessed should your checks be returned by your bank or other financial institution.

3. LATE PICK UP FEE OF \$10 if your daughter is not picked up by 6:15pm and \$1 charge for every minute or portion thereof until 6:30pm. That money is to be paid at the time you pick her up. If you do not have any means to pay this fee, the fee will be added to your account and must be paid off at the end of the month. **Every effort will be made to reach the individuals you have authorized to pick up your daughter, however, if your daughter is not picked up by 6:30pm the police will be notified that your child was abandoned.**

4. There are NO REFUNDS for membership fees, deposits and program fees.

Dress Code

Tennis shoes (with socks) or closed-toed shoes are **required** wear for your daughter during the summer program and recommended during the school year. This helps reduce injuries and encourages program participation. (For example, we have a sports program each day in the summer and sandals makes it hard for her to participate and could cause injury.)

Because we are an activity center, the girls often get dirty and/or sweaty in our programs and sit on the floor regularly. The recommended dress for the girls is shorts or jeans and t-shirts. If the girls come in their nicer clothes, please make sure they request a smock or bring older clothes to change into at our center. Smocks are available for all painting programs.



Personal Cell Phones, Smartphones, Tablets, Laptops, Etc.

Girls Inc. of Bay County follows the same basic wireless device use policy as the school system. Girls may have them, but they should be in their book bags at all time. If a girl is using a device without permission it will be confiscated by program staff and returned to the parent when the girl is picked up.

At times, girls may be given permission to use their personal devices as a part of supervised activity. During such time the device should only be used as directed by staff. While utilizing such devices:

- Girls are expressly prohibited from posting to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, blogs, websites, or any other external sites while at Girls Inc. of Bay County.
- Girls shall not send, display or download offensive or inappropriate messages or pictures
- Use obscene language, harass, insult or attack others
- Violate copyright laws
- Visit any unapproved or inappropriate website

Under no circumstances will Girls Inc. staff provide anyone with the password to the Girls Inc. WiFi. Girls Inc. of Bay County, its staff, officers and Board Members are not responsible for any damage, theft or loss of any personal wireless device brought to the Center.

Personal Belongings

Girls Inc. is not responsible for any personal belongings brought to the center that are subsequently lost, stolen, or broken. Periodically, all items in lost and found will be donated to a local charity.

Snacks and Summer Meals

We offer a limited snack time daily after school and during summer camp. Girls are encouraged to bring a healthy snack from home.

As a service to our parents and girls, Girls Inc. sells an afternoon snack. The cost of snack ranges from 25 cents to \$1.00 per item and drinks are 60 cents. In an effort to teach healthy living habits, girls are limited to one snack and one drink. Snack time is between 3:00-4:00pm each day.

Being responsible for your money is a first step to taking responsibility for yourself and your belongings, so each girl must keep her own money. Girls are highly encouraged to put money in their pockets or in their shoe to avoid losing it.

During the summer we participate in the USDA free breakfast and lunch program. A free cold breakfast is served each day from 7:30– 8:15 A.M, and a free lunch is also served each day if your daughter places her lunch order each day by 8:30 A.M. Lunchtime is at 11:30 A.M. A menu is provided at each center so you and your daughter know what is for lunch and breakfast each day. Girls are always welcome to bring their own lunch from home.

Girls Inc. does not provide the use of refrigerators or microwaves.



Conflict Resolution

Every effort will be made to serve girls and parents who respect and respond to our program philosophy. We will not continue to serve a parent who becomes disruptive and disrespectful to staff and girls. We feel confident that any differences of opinion may be resolved in a role-modeling manner.

Computer Use

Girls Inc. provides computer and internet access to members for the purpose of engaging in staff directed online programs, conducting supervised research, and working on school assignments. Girls Inc. members, visitors and internet user are responsible for their actions and responsible for acting considerately and appropriately, in accordance with all laws and rules listed below.

When at Girls Inc., **All members and visitors will not:**

- *Use a computer unless there is a staff member present*
- *Use a computer unless given permission to do so, especially when in the office or administrative areas of the center*
- *Print anything until given permission by a staff member in charge*
- *Send, display, or download offensive or inappropriate messages or pictures*
- *Download any software, apps, data, pictures, music, art, or other internet matter*
- *Give out personal information on any website, personal page, blog, or other area*
- *Use obscene language, harass, insult or attack others*
- *Damage computers, systems, or networks (this includes changing workstation or printer configurations, deliberately destroying data or spreading computer viruses)*
- *Violate copyright laws*
- *Use other users' passwords or share their passwords*
- *Trespass in other users' files, folders, or work*
- *Bring food or drink to the computer area.*
- *Visit unapproved or inappropriate websites. These will be made known to you by a Girls Inc staff member during your class or lab time.*

Girls Inc. of Bay County has the right to read and retain any electronic messages transmitted/received via use of a computer located at Girls Inc. of Bay County.

Violation of any of the policies and procedures regarding the use of the internet or any computers at Girls Incorporated may result in:

1. Loss of access to ANY computer
2. Loss of membership to Girls Inc. depending on the severity of the offense
3. Legal action, if and when necessary.

Security Policy

Girls Inc. has adopted policies for the safety of our girls and we strictly enforce them. This policy applies not only to picking up your daughter but to all communication between your daughter and people outside Girls Inc., including but not limited to phone calls, center visits, and field trips.

When you enroll your daughter in Girls Inc., we will take the names of any persons authorized to pick up your daughter. You may have as many people as you like authorized to pick up your child, but we must have their names and phone numbers and this must be done in advance. No phone calls or notes will be accepted; **only in person authorization by the parent or legal guardian.** Each girl will be given a Girls Inc. number, and anyone authorized to pick her up should know this number as they will be required to sign their name against a file card kept on all Girls Inc. members. **Please allow time for this procedure when picking up your daughter. No exceptions will be made to the above procedure.** Please realize this procedure is done for the protection of your child. ***No child is ever to be taken from Girls Inc. without checking her out***

first. Pick-up from field trips and special events is not permitted without prior arrangements.

Violation of the Security Policy may result in your daughter being suspended from the program.

Parents are always welcomed and encouraged to visit our programs, but all visitors must check in with the office upon arrival.

Parking

When visiting our **Main Center**, please DO NOT PARK in front of the homes opposite our center on Fountain Avenue. Parking on that side of the street could result in a ticket or your car being towed away. (This information comes from the Panama City Police Department.) If you have any trouble finding a parking space, we suggest parking at St. Andrews United Methodist Church across 11th Street. Please note that the clearly marked bicycle lane on 11th Street is not for parking. Your car can be ticketed or towed if parked in the bicycle lane.

Please do not park in or in front of the handicapped parking space in the parking lot. This includes the blue handicapped spot and the big X next to it. We do have girls who are in wheelchairs and their parents cannot get in or out to pick up their daughters.

Medication

No medications are available at Girls Inc., but parents are welcome to leave both prescription and non-prescription medicines with the office. All medications must be given to the office staff; no girls are allowed to carry on their own. Girls can receive medication only after a form has been completed and signed by the parent/legal guardian giving us authorization and directions to give the medication to the child. Parents must understand that the employees of Girls Inc. are not medical professionals and do not administer medication. The employees of Girls Inc. will store the medication and make it available when requested by your daughter. Your daughter must be fully capable of taking her medication independently with supervision.

Sick Child Policy

Girls Inc. promotes good health! If a girl is sick, she should not be left at the center. We will determine a girl to be sick if she exhibits any of the following symptoms: fever of 100 or more, vomiting, diarrhea, dizziness, rash or breaking out without notification or explanation from parent, earache, or excessive toothache. These symptoms will be a general guide for our staff, but they are not all inclusive. We reserve the final judgment whether or not a child should be allowed to stay.

We realize that it is difficult for working parents to deal with sick children; however we must consider how other parents and children will be affected if we allow a sick child to attend.

Head Lice

Head lice are unfortunately a possibility in any public facility. We will send anyone home who has head lice or nits (eggs) and that girl may not return to Girls Inc. until all the lice and nits are gone. (This is the same policy as the school.) We will not check the entire center, but we will check immediate family members and the friends they have been playing with. **It is the parent's responsibility to ensure your daughter is lice and nit free before returning her to the program.** Hopefully you will not have to deal with this unfortunate situation, but it can happen to anyone. Please encourage your daughter not to share any hair products (brushes, barrettes, head bands...) with her friends or bring stuffed animals to the center.

Our staff is trained to detect signs of head lice and will discourage girls from activities that can spread lice. All smocks that the girls wear in our programs are washed and dried before used by another girl to prevent the spread of lice.

According to the Bay County Health Department, head lice die within 24 hours if they have no human contact. The only way to get rid of nits is to pick them, one by one, from your daughter's hair. We know that the process is time-consuming, but if you don't take care of the problem with your daughter, she will only spread it to others.

First Aid

All of our program staff members are certified in First Aid and CPR through the American Red Cross. If a child is injured, we will administer First Aid to the best of our ability. An accident form will be given to you if your daughter was injured and treated at the center.

In case of medical emergency, please understand every effort will be made to contact the parent/guardian. In the event that we cannot reach the parent/guardian, we will secure proper treatment for your daughter from a professional and continue to try and reach the parent/guardian.

Note: Upon signing the application for membership, the parent/legal guardian gives permission to the physician selected by the director or person in charge to hospitalize, secure proper treatment for, and to order injections, anesthesia or surgery for your daughter.

Phone Calls

The girls are not allowed to use the phone without permission from the office staff. The girls can only use the phone to call their parents and it is at the discretion of the office staff. These rules are to prevent the girls calling you at work all day long. If you want your daughter to be able to call you any time during the day, let the office staff know; she will have to ask permission, but we will let her use the phone any time she asks. **Cell Phones are not allowed. If your daughter brings a cell phone to Girls Inc. it must remain off and put up in her book bag.**



Disciplinary Guidelines

Girls Inc. is dedicated to ensuring a safe and nurturing environment. Parents are asked to work with us regarding any problems your child may have. Children must be willing and able to participate with a group/classroom activities. The primary goal of this policy is to reinforce the idea that all behaviors, appropriate or inappropriate, and their consequences are in the child's control. All incidents of misbehavior are documented and retained. This policy applies to behaviors both at the Center or while riding on the bus or van. Program supervisors have the discretion to adjust consequences in order to help improve a girls behavior and to take severity of the behavior into account.

Minor Violations

- Screaming/Yelling
- Running in the Building
- Being in an Unsupervised Area
- "Babying" Younger Girls

Consequences

- 1st – Warning/Time Out
- 2nd – Activity Restriction/Notify Parents
- 3rd – Suspension from Program

Major Violations

- Disrespect to Staff, Equipment, Property
- Swearing or Inappropriate Language

Consequences

- 1st – Activity Restriction/Notify Parents
- 2nd – Suspension from Program
- Also – Restitution for Damaged Property**

Serious Violations

- Attempts to Injure (hitting, biting, kicking)
- Threatening Others with Physical Harm
- Inappropriate Comments and/or Touching
- Stealing/Vandalism/Destruction of Property
- Bullying/Intimidation/Name Calling

Consequences

- 1st - Suspension from Program
- 2nd – Termination of Membership
- Also – Restitution for Stolen/Damaged Property**

Extreme behavior cases involving violence, stealing or destruction of property may result in an immediate suspension or permanent removal from the program. If a child destroys any property belonging to Girls Inc. of Bay County, the parent will be responsible for paying for the cost of the damage. Continued inappropriate behavior(s) may result in permanent removal from the program.

Girls Inc. of Bay County reserves the right to request without advance notice that you pick up your child and to discontinue service if the child's behavior poses a threat to herself, other children, staff or to property belonging to Girls Inc. of Bay County.

It is not our intent to suspend any girl from the fun and healthy activities at the center. IT IS OUR INTENT TO PROVIDE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT, INVOLVE A CHILD'S PARENT, AND ASK FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF OUR STAFF AND TO ASSIST US IN USING CREATIVE BUT EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE.

Parents/Guardians

Girls Inc. expects all adults in the building waiting for their daughter(s) or visiting for a defined purpose to conduct themselves in a manner that is respectful and responsible. Management reserves the right to ask anyone on the property to vacate if their behavior or actions put our members or staff at risk. Noncompliance of any request will result in contacting the local authorities.

How We Keep Our Costs So Low

A lot of parents are amazed at how we can offer our programs for such a low cost. This is only possible with the support of private donations, corporate sponsors, community foundations, fundraising events, and the United Way of Northwest Florida. Many dedicated individuals work very hard to make Girls Inc. happen every day. Any thing you can do as a parent to support our fundraising efforts helps us offer more programs and keep the costs low.

You Are Greatly Appreciated

We appreciate you choosing Girls Inc. for your out of school time needs. You are choosing us to play an important role in your daughter's life—something we do not take lightly. All of the above information and guidelines are set forth for the good of the whole. We are dedicated to helping girls to become healthy, educated, and independent young women.

We want to help you solve any challenge and answer any questions you may have. Please call or stop in any time. We believe that by working together, we can provide the best experience for your daughter in Bay County!



THIS IS A COPY OF THE PARENT UNDERSTANDING YOU SIGNED IN YOUR APPLICATION

PARENT STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

Please keep and refer to your copy of the Girls Inc. Parent Handbook.

- **I understand that Girls Inc. staff and volunteers are not allowed to babysit or transport girls at any time outside of the Girls Inc. program.** Immediate disciplinary action will be taken by Girls Inc. toward staff and volunteers if a violation is discovered.
- I understand that Girls Inc. will not supervise my daughter when she is left at the center before or after Girls Inc. program hours.
- I understand that my daughter is not allowed to leave the program with an unauthorized person. Any person authorized to pick-up my child must be listed in person (by the parent/legal guardian) with Girls Inc. **Notes and phone calls are not accepted to add people to the list.**
- I understand my child's safety is paramount to Girls Inc. Should a person arrive to pick up my daughter who appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, staff may contact the police. Please do not put staff in a position where they have to make this judgment call.
- I understand that Girls Inc. is mandated by law to report suspected cases of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities for investigation.
- **I understand that Girls Inc. closes at 6:00pm daily.** We charge a late fee of \$10 if your child is not picked up by 6:15pm and \$1 per minute for every minute after 6:15pm. For girls left at the Center past 6:30pm we will notify the Panama City Police Dept. and the Dept. of Children and Families that the child has been abandoned.
- I understand, and have **reviewed with my daughter**, the policy regarding the use/possession of cell phones, tablets, electronic games, and other personal electronic devices.
- I understand, and have **reviewed with my daughter**, the Discipline Policy.
- I understand, and have **reviewed with my daughter**, the Computer Use Policy and I accept full legal responsibility should my child damage computers or computer systems/networks; destroy data or equipment; engage in any illegal online activity including cyberbullying, hacking, posting or sending inappropriate messages, videos, photos, etc.; or spread computer viruses from a Girls Inc. computer
- I understand that Girls Inc. reserves the right to serve girls and parents who respect and respond to our program philosophy. We will not continue to serve a parent who becomes disruptive or disrespectful to staff or girls. We feel confident that any and all differences of opinion may be resolved in a role modeling manner.

I have received a copy of the Girls Inc. Parent Handbook.