



## **2023-24 Client Handbook**

---

**Next Generation Focus, Inc.  
SmarterMe Program**

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

Our staff members and volunteers ensure children participate in a unique mix of activities that focus on developmental assets and the building blocks that teach children how to make positive decisions.

Focusing on leadership development, arts education, health and wellness, and academics exposes our students to a breadth of knowledge and skills.

Students are provided daily homework time. Please note that it is the student's responsibility to know if they have homework to complete and to ask if they need help completing assignments.

## **REGISTRATION**

A registration form must be completed along with the supporting documents. Parents/guardians are required to sign the Parent Acknowledge Statement stating that they understand the policies and procedures of SmarterMe.

## **HOURS, DAYS, AND MONTHS OF OPERATION**

### **After-School Program**

The Virtual and In-Person After-School programs operate from 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm, Monday through Thursday. The Cumming In-Person After-School program follows the Forsyth County public school's calendar, while the Virtual and Norcross In-Person After School programs follow the Gwinnett County public school's calendar.

### **Summer Program**

The In-Person Summer programs operate from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm, Monday through Thursday. The Virtual Summer program operates from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm, Monday through Thursday. All Summer programs begin in early June and conclude at the end of July. The exact program dates will be provided.

## **ARRIVAL PROCEDURES**

Our responsibility for your child begins when they enter the SmarterMe program space. Site staff and volunteers will sign in the children each day.

## **DEPARTURE AND RELEASE PROCEDURES**

Students will only be released to the parent(s) or those authorized person(s) listed in the student's registration form. A picture I.D. may be required. If your child is subject to any unusual restrictions (court orders), please immediately notify the director. Your child's safety is our #1 priority.

### Late pick-up

Please call Amy Sol (678-516-5062) if an unexpected emergency will cause you to be late picking up your child. Students are required to be picked up by 6:30 pm. (Summer Camp dismissal starts at 3:00). A late fee of \$1.00 per minute will be imposed for each child picked up after 6:31pm. (Or in the case of Summer Camp, 3:31pm) In the event that a child is repeatedly left past 6:30pm (3:00pm for summer), we reserve the right to terminate the child's enrollment in the program.

If parents can't be notified for pick-up of students who are late, we will begin calling authorized people on the registration form. In the event that no contact has been made with parents after one hour, the director will contact the Department of Family and Children Services.

### EARLY DISMISSAL

In the event of early dismissal due to inclement weather or emergencies, students will be released according to parent instructions specified on the student registration form.

### WITHDRAWAL NOTICE

A written notice must be sent to the director one week prior to the withdrawal date to avoid any additional charges. All notices should be sent to Amy Sol ([amysol@nextgenerationfocus.org](mailto:amysol@nextgenerationfocus.org)).

### HEALTH AND SAFETY

Next Generation Focus does not require staff or volunteers to receive any immunizations in order to work with children. To ensure the health and safety of all, staff and volunteers are required to follow certain procedures to prevent the spread of exposure to disease:

- Wear gloves when handling or cleaning body fluids, such as wiping noses, mouths, or tending sores, scrapes, and cuts
- Specify that a staff member or volunteer with open wounds and/or any injury that inhibits hand-washing, such as casts, bandages, or braces, must not prepare food or have close contact with children in care
- Remove and discard gloves, and wash hands immediately after each task to prevent cross-contamination to other children
- Exclude any staff member or volunteer from direct care when they show signs of illness

In order to protect the health of all children in our care, please keep your child at home if you notice that they begin to show signs of an illness or contagious disease, or if they feel too ill to participate in a group care setting.

Please let us know as soon as possible if your child has a communicable illness or infection. This will allow us to notify the parents of children attending our program. Children with communicable conditions may not return to care without a note from their physician.

If your child becomes ill during the program day, we will contact you to pick them up. In case of injury, parents or guardians will be notified immediately. Ill or injured children will be moved to a separate classroom or space to avoid contact with other children.

### **MEDICAL EMERGENCY**

In the case of a medical emergency, we will call 911 and contact the child's parents/guardians. Responding emergency medical personnel will determine if the child should be transported to a hospital. We will provide them with the information from your child's records as needed. The child will be transported to the hospital as directed by emergency medical personnel, unless stated otherwise in the child's records.

### **PARENTAL NOTIFICATIONS**

Parent/guardian notifications may be made in writing via letters, emails, fliers and/or signage at each site. Notifications may also be made by phone calls or directly in person by site staff/volunteers. Open communication is very important to the success of your child's experience. Conferences may be requested at any time.

### **FOOD SERVICE PRACTICES**

#### **After-School Program**

During the In-Person After-School programs, we provide a peanut-free afternoon snack at the end of each day. If you choose to send an additional snack with your child, please ensure that these foods do not include any form of peanut products.

#### **Summer Program**

During the Norcross In-Person Summer program, breakfast and lunch are provided by the Global Learning Initiative, Inc. During the Cumming In-Person Summer program, lunch is provided by the St. Brendan the Navigator Catholic Church. These meals are peanut-free.

Students may bring their own breakfast or lunch. If you send breakfast or lunch with your child, please ensure that these foods do not include any form of peanut products.

### **INCLUSION**

Next Generation Focus makes every effort to accommodate children with special needs and welcome them into our site. We will do everything possible to make our program accommodating to all children.

Determining our ability to provide services will be done on a case-by-case basis. Next Generation Focus reserves the right to request IEP's and other documentation for review to determine our ability to provide required services.

## **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

Staff members and volunteers are trained in basic emergency procedures. Necessary responses to issues regarding natural disasters (floods, tornados, hurricanes, etc.), hostile situations and fire escape routes are addressed in staff training. In the event of a gas leak, your child will be relocated and you will be notified immediately to come pick them up.

If evacuation is necessary, staff members will first move children to a designated safe area or alternate shelter known to all employees, caregivers and volunteers. Evacuation procedures also address the care of children with limited mobility or who otherwise may need assistance in an emergency, such as children who have mental, visual or hearing impairments. Head counts and roll sheets will be utilized to account for children, and will be conducted by two or more caregivers. At all times, our emphasis will be on keeping children safe.

In cases of inclement weather, the SmarterMe program will follow specific school district recommendations. If school is closed or all after-school extracurricular activities are cancelled due to weather, the SmarterMe In-Person After-School programs will also be closed. If the weather begins to worsen during the day, we will ask you to pick up your child as soon as possible so that our staff members and volunteers may get home safely.

## **ACCOUNTING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **PAYMENTS ARE DUE IN ADVANCE OF STUDENTS ATTENDING SMARTERME.**

Payment is to be paid on the 15 of each month for the upcoming month (for example, payment for February is due on January 15). We accept payment via check, debit, and credit card. Checks should be payable to Next Generation Focus (NGF). You may send your payment with your child in a sealed envelope marked "NGF". You may also pay by debit/credit card on our website. When withdrawing from the program, no refunds will be issued.

### **Late payments and Removal from Program for Non-Payment of Fees**

Payments are late after the first business day of each month, and a \$15 late fee will be added to the tuition total.

If payment has not been received by the 10th of the month, your child may be suspended or terminated from the SmarterMe program at the discretion of the Director.

### **Financial assistance**

Next Generation Focus (NGF) is a community-based organization and believes that its programs and services should be available to everyone regardless of background, ability, or income. We offer financial assistance that is designed to fit your individual financial situation. Limited financial assistance is available to individuals and families who substantiate a need.

Due to the limited availability of funds, families needing assistance should contact Amy Sol and complete the requested paperwork to determine if your family qualifies for financial assistance.

### **DRESS CODE & PERSONAL BELONGINGS**

Children should be dressed according to their school's dress code. Any additional items brought to the program by your child must be labeled (jackets, water bottles, etc). We expect children to be responsible for their personal belongings. However, in the case that personal belongings are left at the site, we will keep them in our Lost and Found. Please contact the site coordinator if you need to check the Lost and Found.

Please leave personal toys, money, video games and players, iPods, and cell phones at home. Next Generation Focus cannot compensate for lost, damaged or stolen items. These items should not be brought to school or camp and will not be replaced by Next Generation Focus.

### **Assistive Devices**

We are not responsible for any lost, stolen, damaged, or broken assistive devices such as hearing aids, contact lenses, or glasses. Please have adequate replacement insurance for such items should they become damaged, misplaced, or broken.

### **DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE PROCEDURES**

Self-management skills and positive social interactions among children are encouraged and maximize everyone's enjoyment of our programs. We use positive guidance methods including reminders, natural consequences, and redirection.

Self-management skills are taught according to the following guidelines:

- Consistent expectations are clearly stated
  - Children are expected to work and play within known limits
- Behavior expected of children is age-appropriate and based on development level
- An atmosphere of trust is established in order for children to know that they will not be hurt nor allowed to hurt others
- Staff members strive to help children become acquainted with themselves and their feelings.

Child safety is our most important concern; therefore, children whose behavior is dangerous or repeatedly disruptive must be immediately picked up from the program by someone designated through the departure and release procedures. Repeatedly disruptive or dangerous behavior will

be discussed with the child's parent and may result in loss of privileges or activities, suspension, or termination from the program at the director's discretion.

All children are entitled to a pleasant and safe environment while participating in this program. We will not serve children who repeatedly display unacceptable behavior. Children who exhibit any type of behavior which is thought to be unacceptable or unsafe by staff will be warned to correct their behavior, and a telephone call will be made to the child's parent or guardian.

### **In-Person Etiquette**

We expect children to behave as follows:

- Be responsible for personal belongings
- Participate in all activities
- Possess positive and caring attitudes
- Respect for fellow students and staff/volunteers
- Follow proper safety procedures at all times, including:
  - Never opening outside doors
  - Not fighting or using foul language
  - Not running in the halls
  - Not playing in the restrooms
  - Not playing on or under the tables

Unacceptable behavior includes:

- Using foul language
- Disrespecting another child or staff member/volunteer
- Fighting
- Refusing to take part in activities
- Ignoring or disobeying rules of safety
- Public or inappropriate displays of affection
- Defacing property or vandalism
- Stealing

### **Virtual Etiquette**

We expect children enrolled in the virtual program to behave as follows:

- Join class on time
- Sit upright at a table or desk
- Mute your audio when not speaking
- Position camera to show your face
- Participate in all activities
- Possess positive and caring attitudes
- Respect for fellow students and staff/volunteers

Unacceptable behavior includes:

- Sharing class links and passwords
- Excessively typing in the chatting
- Using foul language
- Disrespecting another child or staff member/volunteer
- Fighting
- Refusing to take part in activities
- Using digital tools to cheat

### **Disciplinary Procedures**

First Incident: Parent will be notified verbally and/or in writing.

Second Incident: Child will receive a written warning and one week suspension.

Third Incident: The action taken is at the discretion of the Program Director after appropriate consultation with the parent. This may result in suspension or termination.

Next Generation Focus reserves the right to remove a child from the program at any time should the offense be deemed a serious disciplinary problem.

### **PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT**

Next Generation Focus requires that all parents of enrolled children behave in a manner consistent with the values and mission of our organization.

Parents are required to uphold the guidelines listed below:

#### **Swearing/Cursing**

No inappropriate language from parents or any other adult within the walls of the SmarterMe program site. Inappropriate language is offensive and will not be tolerated. At no time shall inappropriate language be directed toward staff members, volunteers, children or parents.

#### **Threatening of Employees, Children, or Parents**

Threats of any kind will not be tolerated. All threats towards employees, volunteers, children, or parents will be reported to the appropriate authorities. The adult making the threat may be prohibited from entering the facility in the future. Parents must be responsible for and in control of their behavior at all times.



### **Violations to the Conduct Policy**

Should a parent behave in a manner that is inconsistent with the agreed upon code of conduct, they will be asked to leave the premises immediately and the situation and events will be investigated. Once the investigation is complete, the parents and adults involved will meet to discuss further action. Inappropriate behavior among adults on child care property will not be tolerated.

### **CHANGES TO HANDBOOK**

Changes may be made to the SmarterMe Handbook at any time. If a change is made, parents will be notified via email of any new policy changes.